

BEHIND THE SCENES: E3 2002 - PAGE 38

GAMEINFORMER

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The Getaway

SONY'S ANSWER TO GTA3

SPLINTER CELL

Tom Clancy Meets Solid Snake



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ISSUE
111

JULY 2002



PlayStation.2

THREE SIGHTS NOT TO BE MISSED IN ROME. TURNS 2, 5 AND 7.



Mild Lyrics



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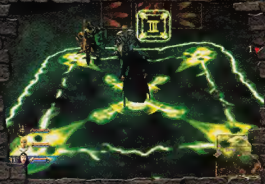
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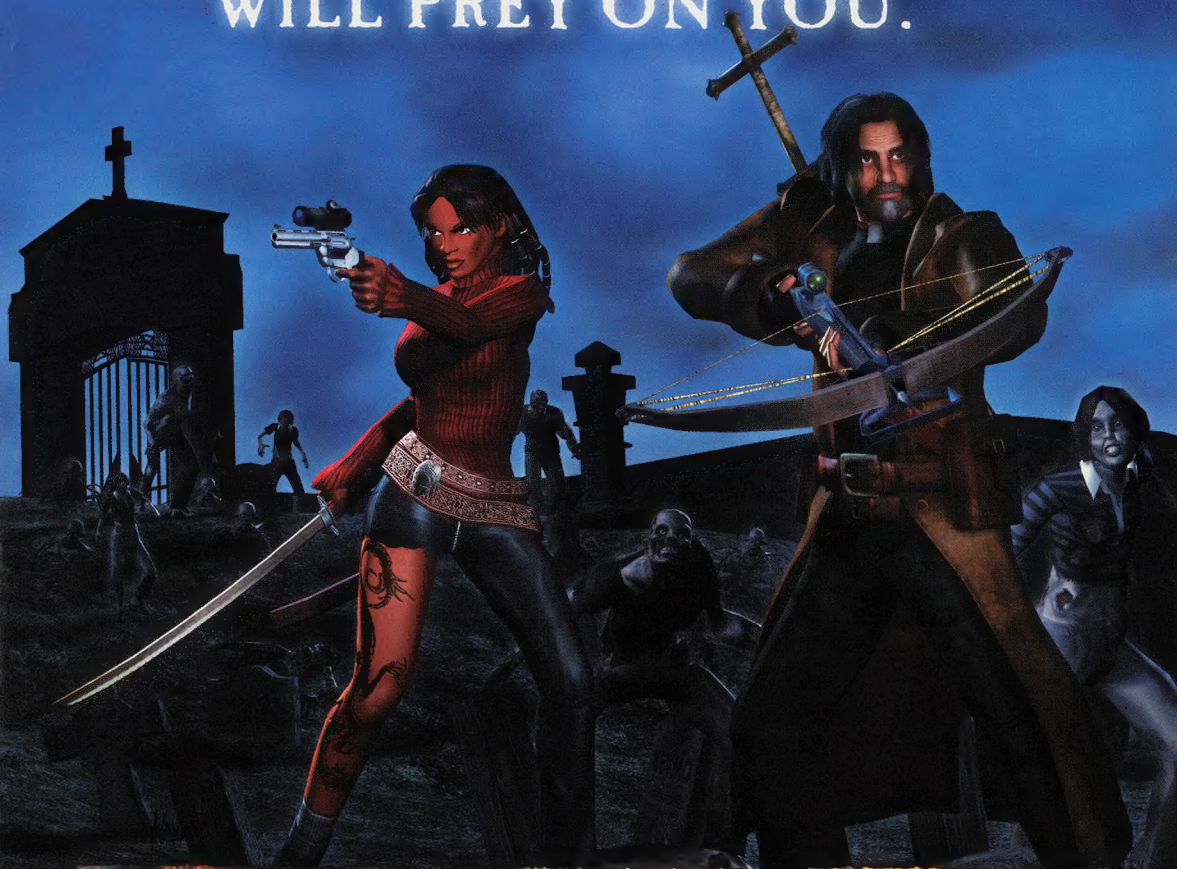
Sneak Preview @ www.legion.midway.com

PlayStation 2



Blood
Violence

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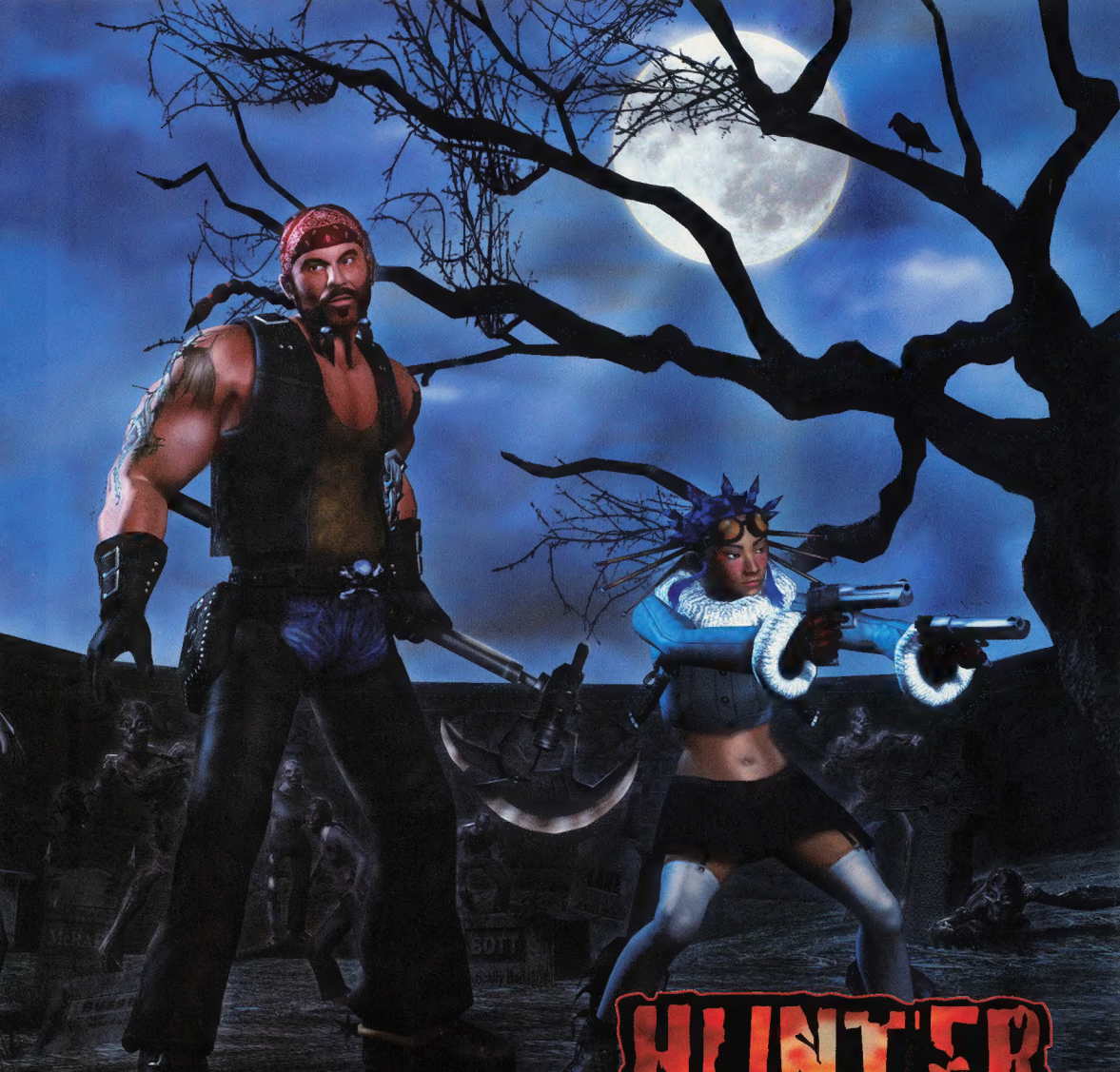
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Violence

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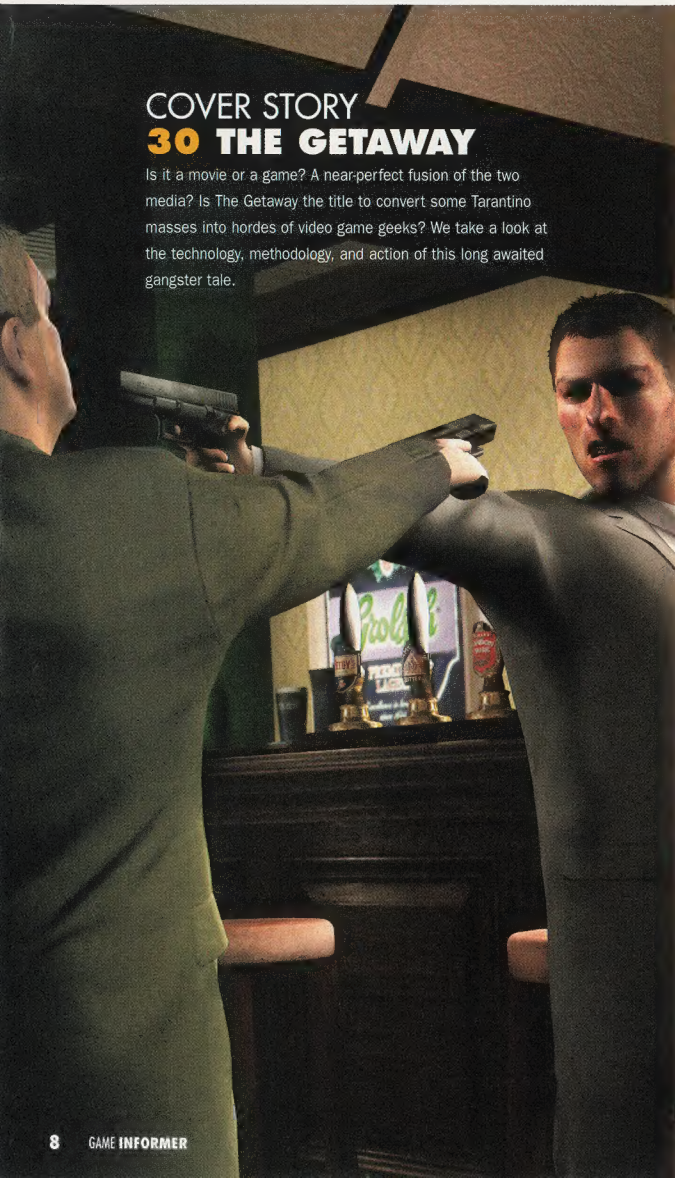
Outrun and outwit the law and enemy gangs.

GAMEINFORMER

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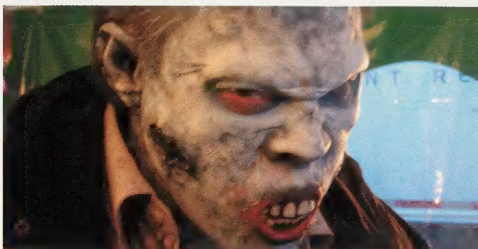
COVER STORY **30 THE GETAWAY**

Is it a movie or a game? A near-perfect fusion of the two media? Is *The Getaway* the title to convert some Tarantino masses into hordes of video game geeks? We take a look at the technology, methodology, and action of this long awaited gangster tale.



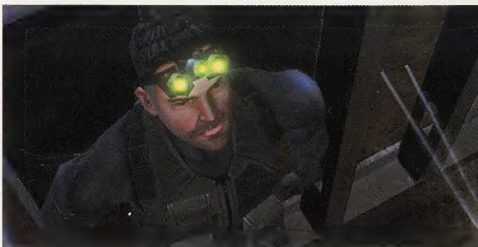
FEATURE **38 ELECTRONIC ENTERTAINMENT EXPO**

This year's E3 had a lot of flash and a lot of show (like it always does), but ultimately each company and platform held its own with solid titles and interesting floorshows – without stealing anyone else's thunder. C'mon down and take a peek at our thoughts on the industry's big dance.



FEATURE **48 THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD - THE MOVIE**

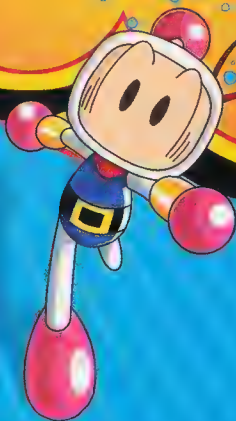
We visit the set of *The House of the Dead* in Vancouver, Canada to bring the latest on this video game-inspired horror movie set to hit the streets in Spring of 2003. Get the inside dirt on the plot, the zombies, the crazy overnight shooting schedule, and what to expect from the cast of (mostly) newcomers.



FEATURE **50 SPLINTER CELL**

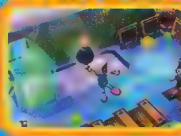
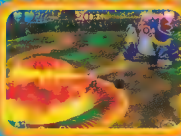
Tom Clancy meets Metal Gear meets intrigue meets gadgets. If you think you've seen everything your Xbox has to offer, think again, holmes. The graphics, character modeling, animation, and lighting will become the new standard for stealth action games.

(Have you heard who's on Nintendo GameCube?)



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18 GI SPY

The Game Informer paparazzi stalk the video game industry, bringing you candid photos of all the action.

20 DEAR GI

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PS2, Xbox, and GameCube are all hanging out online. GTA puts itself into a committed relationship. Apparently, the American video game market needs way more nude women in each game and the ESRB is iffy about it. Nintendo makes a Triforce and plays the executive shuffle. *The Matrix* world

online? Star Wars Galaxies is set to ooze across all platforms and the Justice League is about to make its mark.

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Sequels (*The Legend of Zelda*, *Contra: Shattered Soldier*, *Super Mario Sunshine*, and *Doom III*) and movies (*The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, *James Bond: NightFire*, and *Star Wars: Bounty Hunter*) and other good games (*Resident Evil 0*)...oh my!

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98 SECRET ACCESS

Defy your inferiority complexes by cheating right on past Britney and her crazy dance beats. Scam some new weapons of destruction in *State of Emergency*, and fly even more cool ships in *Star Wars: Rogue Leader*.

102 CLASSIC GI

GI talks to a few rabid connoisseurs of the classics - video game hardware and software classics. With a little help from some friends, we'll tell you how to get started, and where to go to round-out your very own vid collection. Plus, we have a really smashing SNES *Out of This World* strategy guide for you to chew on.

108 ETC

Damn the man! Free ODB and play your GameCube without all of those pesky wires. While you're at it, pop in a Mario DVD and have the little *WarCraft* men fight on your coffee table. You know you're cool.



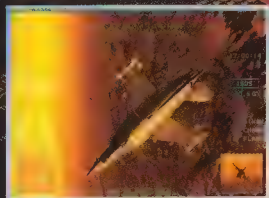


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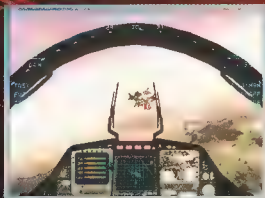
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GAMEINFORMER®

JULY 2002

Volume XII • Number 7 • Issue 111

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SUNRISE PUBLICATIONS, INC

President John Woodson

Manufactured and printed in the United States of America

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EDITORS' FORUM

FUNDAMENTALLY SOUND



Unlike most years, the 2002 Electronic Entertainment Expo didn't have any runaway software masterpieces. At first, I wanted to believe the problem was that developers and publishers weren't trying new things. But upon further investigation, it appears to be quite the opposite. This year marks one of the few times that almost every company at the show had a very solid, fundamentally sound game to show.

Even though there are a fair share of quality titles, if I were asked today to pick which game was going to be the biggest holiday blockbuster, I would be a little hard-pressed to make a choice. One obvious answer would be Grand Theft Auto: Vice City, the follow-up to last year's surprise megahit on PS2. Unfortunately, the game wasn't even at the show. My second pick would have to go to The Legend of Zelda (GC), but that title won't be available until 2003 – which is the same problem the PC title Doom III has. It was easily the talk of the show for its graphical prowess, but it won't hit the market until next year, either.

So the question still remains: "Where are the big holiday blockbusters?" I think, unlike most years,

gamers will have more options in the genres they want to play than ever before. The result of this broadening of the market may equate to less super blockbusters and more good old-fashioned hits.

As an editor, I really like the megahits as it's easy to inform the readers which games they should be playing. Personally, however, I like the wide variety of solid games as it gives me more titles I want to play. For the consumer, I think it means that researching games and getting as much info on each title will be crucial. So, for the rest of the year, Game Informer will work very hard to make sure that we give you the tools you need to make the right buying decisions for your taste. It won't be as easy as just walking into a store and asking what is hot, as the number of games that would score a nine or better will be far greater this year than most budgets can afford.

On a side note, I forgot to welcome Chet Barber and Lisa Mason to the staff last month. I'm excited about our new team members and I think you will find their reviews to your liking. Also, make sure you spend some time in the Previews section this month as we have tons of new product to show. Cheers!

Andy McNamara
Editor
andy@gameinformer.com

REINER, THE RAGING GAMER

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At this year's Sony celebrity party, I bumped into the fastest web shooter in the west, Tobey Maguire. As a lifelong comic book fan, it was my obligation to find out how much this knucklehead actually knew about Spider-Man in the first place. Before I could ask a question, however, one of Tobey's friends interjected, "Is you know you're talking to? he's the biggest man in America!" A tad irritated, I sarcastically replied with, "I know who I'm talking to, it's Hayden Christensen!" Tobey rolled with laughter, but quickly fled the scene before I could get on to him. I've made a new enemy, and his name is Spider-Man.

MATT, THE ORIGINAL GAMER

matt@gameinformer.com
This year's E3 parties were the bomb, and I was lucky enough to witness two of the better performances – OutKast and Jane's Addiction – that I've ever seen. The show itself was just as stellar, with more awesome games than I had time to play. This fall is going to be a great one for every system. My only disappointment was the fact that both the next Halo and Grand Theft Auto: Vice City were MIA. Still, the fact that I got to bump into a stinky-drunk Coolio staggering down the back stairs of my hotel more than makes up for it.

KRISTIAN, THE GAME DAWG

kristian@gameinformer.com
E3 is over! Ohmgawd it was so funny that that one PR person was talking with that one marketing person about at that party that you know nothing about it was totally hilarious! You should have been there. Where were you? Then at the show when I ran into that crazy person and they said something that became the inside joke for all of us during the whole show. Where's the Pizza Hut? Right guys? That kills me just thinking about it! We'll for sure have to do this again next year. Everyone should meet next to the food stand where that guy with one ear corks burgers.

JUSTIN, THE DIGITAL DEVIAN

justin@gameinformer.com
Oh oh. All the hustle and bustle of E3 and the post-show 16-hour workdays have got me feeling a little valedict. Talk amongst yourselves; I'll give you a topic: Metroid Prime is neither a good representation of Metroid, nor a prime title. Discuss. Ok, I'm better now. Big ups to OutKast and Jane's Addiction for amazing performances. Big apologies to all the people I jacked in front of to meet WWE hottie Stacy Keibler. Big amazement that every celeb at Sony's Standard party was under 5'6". Now I need an escape from this madness. Is there any room on your couch for me to crash for awhile?

KATO, THE GAME KATANA

kato@gameinformer.com
I won't go as far as saying that E3 was disappointing, but it was deceptive. There was little I was totally g-a-g-a over, but I think we can look forward to batches of solid games for each console. Funfully enough, some of my good times had nothing to do with the industry – seeing the Lakers lose in game 3; learning about dirty soccer tricks; and speaking Japanese with Chet and his friend. I think of all the money poured into the event and I laugh, because all I wanted to do was go to an In-N-Out Burger – and it never happened. I hate LA.

CHET, THE CHRONIC GAMER

chet@gameinformer.com
My E3 started off with a bit of a bang: Reiner, with his powerful boss abilities, forced me to smash my head into the glass door of our hotel...one day Reiner, one day! As for the parties my colleagues keep blabbing about, and the celebrities they met, I say screw 'em. All of the real stars could be found in one of the various hotel bars in downtown LA. Over a few beers, I got the chance to meet and talk with Yui Naka; Takayuki Kawagoe (Smilebit); Hideo Kojima; the Street Fighter II Contra; and Sukken Creators; and more. Needless to say, I felt very humbled in their presence, and honored to meet the men who shaped my childhood.

LISA, LA GAME NIKITA

lisa@gameinformer.com
I will never be an E3 virgin again. A few notes to self for next year: Earplugs are my friend, fashion be damned, sell blister kits at the front door for ridiculous profit, bring water or make buddies with a good free-beverage software booth, never count on having any extra time, and don't be at all surprised at how much feet really can swell. Also know that the choice to accept free t-shirts must be weighed carefully against a complex algorithm of weight over distance divided by hours and multiplied by pi.



The GI staff has sophisti-ma-cated interests outside video games. Insets: (top to bottom) 1. Lisa gives polite applause while Chet concentrates on Pokémon Gold. 2. No one hits more sour notes than Reiner. 3. Diva Justin belts out an aria. Background: Andy and Kristian chill in the balcony. Matt leaves the cheap seats for something better. Kato checks out the fat lady.

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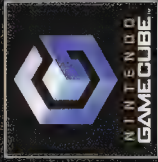
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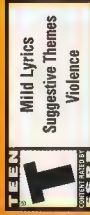
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GI SPY



1 CANDID PHOTOS FROM THE SEAMY UNDERBELLY OF THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY

1 All Chet wanted was a romantic evening with Sega's legendary Yuji Naka, and then HighWater Group's Laura Heeb and *Tips & Tricks*'s Anatole Brown had to come by and ruin everything.

2 Reiner and Chet learn the secrets of fighting perfection from Capcom's Noritaka Funamizu (*Street Fighter*, *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure*) and Yoshihiro Sudo (*Capcom vs. SNK*, *PowerStone 2*).

3 "Alright, who's the joker who yelled 'Freebie!'" Tecmo's John Inada takes lead vocals as Rygar creator Satoshi Kanematsu gets busy on his Les Paul.

4 Andy, Capcom's Masayuki Fukumoto, Steel Battalion creator Atsushi Inaba, Reiner, and Microsoft's Shon Dameron pow-wow at the Microsoft E3 party.

5 Steven Spielberg and a member of Weezer? Nope, just the two men that are changing the FPS as we know it—Jon Storm's Warren Spector and Harvey Smith.

6 Gi's Rob Borm poses pretty with Activision's Victoria Cushman and Jeff Kaltreider. 7 Freelancer/CNN personality Marc Saltzman and *Newsweek*'s Ngai Croal play a game of *Auto Modellista* at the Sony party in the downtown Standard Hotel.

8 Following the Microsoft press conference, software shaman Ed Fries looks demused as an unidentified English male with funny hair jumps in the picture.



**THE ONLY THING LEFT
STANDING IS FREEDOM.**



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Feel the Roar of War



In the cockpit of Fireblade there is one goal: use whatever means available to annihilate the terrorist cells flaming up around the globe. Battle through 18 Missions in 4 campaigns at the helm of the carrier chopper or the Vendetta attack copter and unleash a barrage of hi-tech deadly weapons. Go turbo, or remain undetected from enemies in stealth mode. To win the war, you've got to end the war. Attack and destroy!



Blood and Gore
Violence



PlayStation®2

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DEAR GI

WOMEN GET NO LOVE?

Hey guys, women buy and play games, too! We also read the magazine and are not stupid. Please don't act like we can't read between the lines of some of the sick comments you make. Doesn't my money spend like yours? I think that women pay some of your wages, if I'm not mistaken. One thing I can't stand is how you have no women working for you, or the fact that there are no women programmers/developers. For example, in issue #109, in the article on the DICE Summit, there were no women featured.

I believe that women see games differently than men, and I want to know what women think about the games as well as how they rate them.



Angela B. Justus
Eugene, Oregon

It's no secret that the video game industry has been a little boy's club for most of its existence, but the increasingly mainstream popularity of gaming is slowly changing the demographics of the business. This is obvious right here in the pages of Game Informer, where we have recently welcomed Lisa "Not A Girl, Not Yet A Woman" Mason to our staff. Hopefully, this sassy lass can help temper the testosterone-filled pages of GI with an intelligent female perspective. In the past, the terms "intelligent" and "Game Informer" have rarely been used in the same sentence, or paragraph for that matter, but the times they are a-changin'. As for our DICE Summit feature, our interview subjects were simply chosen for the fact that they were giving keynote addresses or participating in roundtable discussions during the course of the summit. Unfortunately, there were no women that were asked to appear at the conference, although many were in attendance. In the years to come, we expect that there will be many more women assuming control of the development process, and DICE will likely change to reflect that.

RELIGIOUS GAME?

It appears to me from your preview in issue 109 that Xenosaga: Episode 1 will have a religious theme which may be influenced by Judaism. Three points support this:

1. Earth is called Lost Jerusalem. This doesn't need explanation, as everyone knows what Jerusalem is.
2. One screenshot shows what looks like the monolith, the big tan thing that's vaguely in the shape of a cross with a red letter in the center. This letter is none other than the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
3. The monolith is called Zohar. The Zohar is a book written nearly two thousand years ago, containing what could best be described as prophecies. It is believed to

have been written by a Jewish sage on his deathbed, and is studied by some Jewish scholars.

Interesting, no? Maybe you could ask Tetsuya Takahashi about this?

Benjamin
Via email

Those are some interesting observations. Although we weren't able to reach Mr. Takahashi at press time, our sources have it that Xenosaga, like its predecessor, Xenogears, will have a religious undercurrent. Also - given that it's an RPG - it's likely that the game's plot will be pretentious, long-winded, and make virtually no sense at all.

THE FINE LINE BETWEEN STUPID AND CLEVER

Are all the letters you get retarded, or do you only print the stupidest ones?

The Lord of the Gobblins
Via email

We think you just answered your own question.

WHAT?!

I am a 13-year-old gamer and I play video games fairly frequently. However, I just found out that there are things in life other than video games. About two years ago I bought Diablo II and then later the expansion pack. I played this game for endless hours, and even while I was playing and having fun, I knew my life was being wasted away. A couple weeks ago I quit. I am very proud of what I did. I just wrote this to you gamers out there to tell you that there are other things in life other than video games. I do still play video games, but much less now. Go out and do the things you want to do before you settle down and watch your life waste away in front of a screen.

Andrew Balzer
Via msn.com

Here, here. Really, do you think we are just a bunch of out-of-shape social misfits who do nothing more than burn their brains out with video games day in and day out? Hardly. Just look at Reiner! He has tons of good friends...well, maybe acquaintances might be a better word...and a very attractive girlfriend...at least he did, until that whole messy restraining order business. Kato is a regular Renaissance man, what with his commemorative plate collection

and his Ham radio. Andy has a number of interests outside of video games, and we'll let you know just as soon as we think of one.

The point is, there are so many amazing things to try in this life. If you're sick of playing games, why not try reading...Game Informer? Or, flex your creative muscles by writing a letter or a Greatest Game of All Time submission to Game Informer. Even better, get artistic by drawing some video game envelope art and mailing it to Game Informer. There's a whole wide world out there, kids; don't let it pass you by.

DIRTY MINDS

In Issue 109, Page 20, GI News, in the article entitled "Square Soft and Nintendo Finally Reunite", there is a questionable picture of Nintendo's ever-so-popular character Mario right behind what looks to me like a midget Chocobo. My question is: What is Mario doing to the Chocobo? It looks to me like the Chocobo is Mario's "Sunshine."

Daniel Garcia
Via email

Daniel, Daniel, Daniel...whatever are you referring to? It's pretty obvious that the friendly Chocobo in question is giving Mario a lift to a tea party that Nintendo and Square were throwing in honor of their new partnership - a nice, Innocent TEA PARTY, you little hooligan!! Go wash your mind out with soap, you cheeky devil! Just be glad that we aren't telling your Mom about this letter.

DELAYS ARE A-O-K!

First off, I'd like to mention how incredibly AWESOME your mag is. However, I don't know why you always dis Nintendo for delaying games. I mean, I DO know why, but I don't understand why. Think of it this way: Every game Nintendo has delayed has turned out to be a smash hit, excluding Paper Mario. Conker's Bad Fur Day was delayed numerous times, yet when it released you praised it beyond belief. They delay the games to make them better, not to torture us like you try to say. I don't give a damn whether or not Star Fox: Dinozaur

Planet is delayed 20 times, because I KNOW it's going to be awesome! And when they finally DON'T delay a game and it's still great, you STILL don't give them their due respect. Super Smash Bros. Melee got a 9.25. That's a respectable score, but after I played it, it's at LEAST a 9.75! My complaint, in simple form, is this: STOP DISSING NINTENDO! Thank you for listening to my ranting and raving. Other than this, don't change a thing. Your mag still rocks.

Matt
Via aol.com



Nintendo's commitment to quality software IS second to none, and your letter caused us to rethink our criticisms of Miyamoto and co.'s predilection towards tardiness. Really, who cares if we have to wait the better part of a decade for Metroid Prime? It could all be worth it in the end. Inspired by Nintendo's perfectionism, we've decided to redouble our efforts, in order to make this the top magazine in the industry. Here's a promise: The next issue of Game Informer will be the best ever! Look for it on newsstands sometime in the first quarter of 2004.

THE DIFFERENCE

What's the difference between a developer and a publisher?

Anonymous
Via email

Generally, the developer is the company, including the programmers, artists, level designers, etc., that actually creates the game. The title is then signed by the publisher, which handles the marketing, advertising, manufacturing, and distribution of the product. The profits of the game's sales are split between the two based on the publishing contract. Oftentimes, in the cases of large companies (Square Soft, Nintendo, Sony, EA, et al), a single corporation is responsible for both the development and publishing of a title.

But wait – there's more! It turns out that you are author of the lucky one-millionth letter to Dear GI. As a special prize, you're going to get a free explanation on the difference between buffalo and bison (courtesy of www.northforkbison.com):



"The animal that we've come to know and love in this country as the buffalo is the same as the bison. People refer to them as both names – and that's okay. There are two subspecies of bison in North America: the Plains Bison (mainly in the US and Canada) and the Wood Bison (mainly in Canada). There is also a European Bison called the Wisent (pronounced wee'sent). All three look a little bit different from each other. The scientific name of the bison is "Bison bison" (Genus species). However, the bison is not a "true" buffalo, scientifically speaking. There are at least two true buffalo, which include the African Cape Buffalo and the Asian Water Buffalo. Many people in the bison industry package the meat they sell as "bison", so customers know for sure they are getting bison and not water buffalo."



Charles Atkins
What the heck? Kirby couldn't be any worse than George Clooney.

JULY WINNER!

Kevin Gritske
"Psst! Look behind you!"

Enter the Game Informer Envelope Art Contest. All you need to do is draw, paint, scratch, spt, or carve the best darn envelope art you can think of and send it to us. Please include your name, phone number, and return address on the back of the envelope. If you're the monthly winner, we'll feature your work in GI and you'll receive a video game prize from the Game Informer vault.

Send to:
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Envelope Art Contest
724 North First St., 4th Floor
Mpls, MN 55401



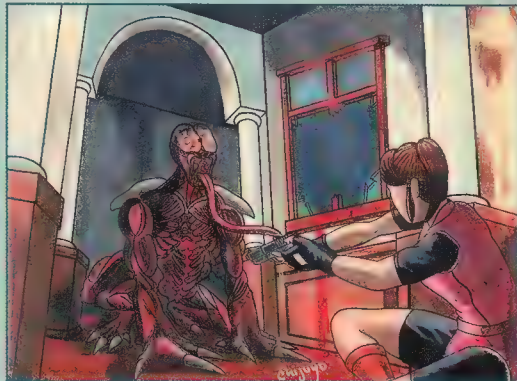
Jaclyn Sarah Lott
What's Princes Toadstool doing in this picture?



Gerson Samuel Lopez
Not even Drederick Tatum could mess with the Big Red Homer Machine.



Clara Garcia
Today on Jerry Springer: Transsexual Capcom action heroes!



Chijuyo
Here's what Gene Simmons really looks like without the makeup.

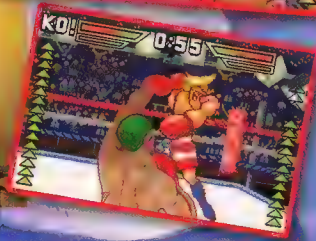
PUNCH KING

**the Ring
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Features:

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GAME BOY ADVANCE

Acclaim



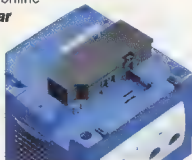
Violence

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GLIMPS

NINTENDO SENDS GAMECUBE ONLINE

The **GameCube** has joined the online fray, with **Sega's Phantasy Star Online Episode I & II** – its first playable product this fall. To this end, Nintendo will sell both the **v.90 Modem Adaptor** and **Broadband Adaptor** for the system at a price of \$34.95 apiece. No details regarding ISPs for the program have been given yet.



GameCube Adaptor

Out of the three console makers, **Nintendo** was expected by many to adopt online play for the **GameCube** last, if ever. **Shigeru Miyamoto** himself was lukewarm on the idea when initially asked about the console going online before it was released. This wariness to the gaming medium is something that is still shared by the company, despite this announcement. Nintendo's new President, **Satoru Iwata**, explained that because "online is only within reach of a few gamers," this sector will not be the company's main focus. It instead plans to handle this area of its business in a more hands-off manner (including pricing issues) similar to **Sony** – giving game studios the tools, but little else.

So as not to impede developers and publishers from using the **GameCube** for online play, however, Nintendo has stated that it will not receive royalty fees for revenue created by those titles. Unfortunately, no in-house franchises such as **Mario** or **Super Smash Bros.**, have been officially announced to go online just yet.

For more on Nintendo's **E3**, go to page 44.

XBOX COMES ALIVE

At a press conference preceding **E3**, **Microsoft** unveiled the fall online program for its Xbox system entitled **Xbox Live**. Unlike **Sony** and **Nintendo**, this model will be more centralized, with **Microsoft** offering an **Xbox Live Starter Kit** for \$49.95. This service is based on a yearly subscription model, and is hosted on the company's servers. **Microsoft** hopes this frees developers from the cost and aggravation of having to do it themselves.

Also included in the kit is the **Xbox Voice Communicator**, which will work with all the Live titles and even provide voice masking to hide your identity. As the platform plays online with broadband only, you will have to supply your own connection. Poking fun at Sony's use of narrowband, though, Xbox's General Manager **J Allard** characterized it as "sucking pizza through a straw – decidedly unsatisfying." Other services include matchmaking, a single user identity that will follow you no matter what game you're playing, communities, and the opportunity for downloadable content.

Joining those listed below on or near the service's unveiling are games like **Counter-Strike**, **NFL 2K3**, **NBA 2K3**, **NCAA College Basketball 2K3**, **Time Splitters 2**, online-augmented versions of **Halo**, **Project Gotham**, **RalliSport Challenge**, and **Amped**. Future properties include **XIII**, **Star Wars Galaxies**, **Ghost Recon**, **Toe Jam & Earl III**, and many others. Allard commented that 60 companies have committed to Xbox Live, and **Microsoft** expects 50 online titles by the end of next year.

For more on Xbox's **E3**, go to page 42.



Xbox Voice Communicator



XBOX LIVE ONLINE LAUNCH TITLES

- **Unreal Championship**
- **MechAssault**
- **Phantasy Star Online**
- **Whacked!**
- **NFL Fever 2003**
- **Midtown Madness 3**

PS2 ONLINE LAUNCH LINEUP AND MORE

The **PlayStation 2** online era will officially debut on August 27, when **Sony's** dual broad/narrowband **Network Adaptor** (which includes a start-up disc) releases. **Sony Computer Entertainment of America's** President and COO **Kaz Hirai**, said that its service would be "deviating from a pay-to-play model initially to draw in consumers." However, he didn't rule out a subscription-based online structure in the future.

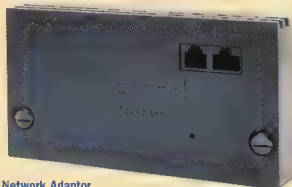
Looking forward, we can also expect the hard drive for the system to debut in 2003, but it wasn't something that **Sony** or **Hirai** was commenting on just yet. Instead, the company plans to offer online gaming that does not require it. Furthermore, a specific ISP isn't needed, and the pack-in disc will offer connections to **AOL**, **Earthlink**, **AT&T**, **WorldNet**, **SBC**, and others. As **Hirai** joked at a pre-E3 press event, "Even **MSN** users are welcome."

As far as software is concerned, the baker's dozen listed below are expected to be at launch, and there are more surprises in store.

Resident Evil Online, **EverQuest Online Adventures** (spring), and **Final Fantasy XI** (summer) have all been announced. Stealing a bit of Xbox's formerly-exclusive thunder, **Star Wars Galaxies** has also been announced for release in late 2003.

Sony is taking a hands-off approach to third-parties, stating that it won't charge a royalty fee to developers, nor will it take a percentage of their profits. An **Evangelization Fund**, however, has been established by **Sony** to help with content, marketing, and tech support.

For more on Sony's **E3**, go to page 40.



Network Adaptor

PLAYSTATION 2 ONLINE LAUNCH TITLES

- **Twisted Metal: Black Online**
(available from a mail-in coupon in the start-up disc)
- **Tribes Aerial Assault**
- **TimeSplitters 2**
- **Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4**
- **SOCOM: US Navy SEALs**
(requires broadband)
- **Madden NFL 2003**
- **NFL 2K3**
- **NFL GameDay 2003**
- **NBA 2K3**
- **NCAA College Basketball 2K3**
- **Frequency 2**
- **ATV Offroad Fury 2**
- **My Street** (puzzle game)

NEXT-GEN NUDITY

While the show floor of **E3** is always replete with scantily clad women vying for the attention of the predominantly male audience, **Acclaim** is poised to do the unthinkable. The company's **Dave Mirra BMX XXX** title (for the **Xbox**, **PlayStation 2**, and **GameCube** this fall) will boldly feature nudity. In a similar move, **Tecmo**, with its **Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball** (on Xbox this summer), features a selection of bikini'd babes frolicking in the sand and sun.

With politicians and parents more mindful than ever of the effect of video games on the nation's young, a game that flouts convention like **Dave Mirra XXX** will surely be an easy target for an **ESRB Mature rating** (requiring buyers to be 17 or older). We're sure you're thinking "what for?" The center of the game's salaciousness revolves around the create-a-player mode. Here you can make your female rider entirely topless, and she will appear in the game's levels as such. In fact, you can even increase her bust size if you so choose. This isn't all, however, as **XXX** also features an industry first – full-motion video of real-life strippers. During the game, the money you earn can be used to encourage ladies of the Scores adult club to disrobe. A similar gameplay option exists in multiplayer. Will they go all the way? An Acclaim representative told us that it had not been determined just how far they would undress. Perhaps the publisher will be forced to insert blurred textures or black bars if total nudity is not possible.



As far as Tecmo is concerned, **Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball** is a little tamer. Still, series creator **Tomonobu Itagaki** was straightforward regarding this latest creation of his "boyish imagination." He commented, "With this game, we are giving fans what they have been asking for all along – the ability to admire gorgeous ladies at play...more specifically, as they jump and dive after a volleyball."

Rumor has it, however, that this fun in the sun may get a little dirty with a topless mode and see-through bikinis – something that isn't unnatural in the publisher's home of Japan. Tecmo's Marketing Director **John Inada** told *GI*, "Naturally, the skimpy bikinis that the **DOA** girls are wearing may put your mind in the gutter, but we have not confirmed anything about the nudity in the game."

So what do the powers that be think? *Game Informer* talked to **Sony of America's** Senior Vice President **Andrew House**, who said that the company would "look to the ESRB for guidance" on titles like **Dave Mirra BMX XXX**. He did, however, categorically dismiss the publishing of any **Adult Only** rated game (must be over 18 to purchase) on the PlayStation 2, Xbox's "Games Guru" **Ed Fries** also agreed with such a ban on adult-only content. The ESRB classifies AO games as those that "may include graphic depictions of sex and/or violence." Interestingly, Acclaim lists Nintendo's GameCube as a platform for **XXX**. *Game Informer* contacted the usually kid-centric maker of the console, but it could not confirm whether **Dave Mirra** was on its schedule, nor if it would allow such a title on its system.

If you think that the scrutiny on video games is already tough, titles like **Dave Mirra BMX XXX** and (possibly) **Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball** may only focus even more heat on the industry – should they ship according to their developers' desires. Like other forms of entertainment, we may be seeing video games going through its growing pains, with sexual content its newest battle line.





R&D

Game Informer's research and development operatives search the globe, seeking out the untapped licenses that will become tomorrow's killer games. If you have any great ideas for games of the future, be sure to drop us a line. Maybe we'll use our godlike power over the video game industry to turn you into a millionaire – or just steal your idea.

MELONBALLER

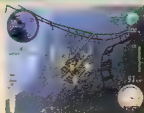


This exciting action/platform title follows the misadventures of Melonballer – a delightfully dull-witted, yet extremely cuddly canine. Melonballer's owners, the Von Trapps, have been taken hostage by a contingent of green reptile-like space

aliens who desperately want the secret teleporting formulae the Von Trapps keep locked away somewhere on the planet Xenadu 1138. Following a number of clues and villains that the evil Ixath have left in their wake, Melonballer bravely leaps from platform to platform (while collecting Hearts and Magic Sousaphones) on a number of different worlds to find his master and bring down the Ixath once and for all. Remember, the more Magic Sousaphones you find, the more Bark Power you'll be able to wield against the evil level bosses that put an exclamation point at the end of each level. If you get bored of the game, you can always go out and buy the plush Melonballer collectable toys at your nearest retailer to make adventures all your own! Doesn't that sound fun? What do you mean, "no"? What the hell do you know?! You'll buy and like it, Timmy – after all, Melonballer was programmed by a crack team of Soviet scientists who know how to put together a good platformer! If you don't like it, you're dumb.

NAME THAT GAME

One of Activision's first PlayStation 2 games was high-flying, but it wasn't a Hawk. This flight-sim title was, surprisingly, one of the first good games for the console due to its realistic weather, controls, and depth. Controlling a variety of planes, you rescued, navigated, and refueled your way through difficult flying challenges; unlocking parts of your map as you progressed. Rocket air!



(Answer on page 29)

TOP 10 PS2 GAMES

HEARD OF IT?

1. Grand Theft Auto: Vice City
2. Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas
3. Grand Theft Auto: III
4. Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City
5. Grand Theft Auto: The Lost and Damned
6. Grand Theft Auto: The Ballad of Gay Tony
7. Grand Theft Auto: Vice City Stories
8. Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas Stories
9. Grand Theft Auto: Vice City Stories
10. Grand Theft Auto: Vice City

Grand Theft Auto: Vice City



ROCKSTAR'S TOP 10 PS2 GAMES

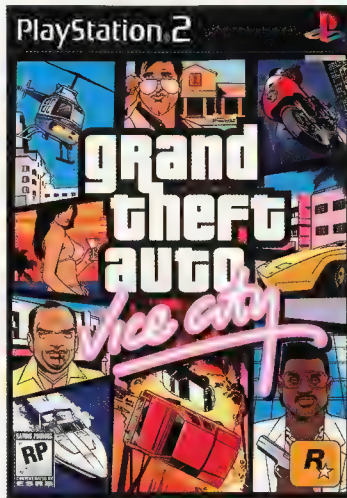
1. Grand Theft Auto: Vice City
2. Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas
3. Grand Theft Auto: III
4. Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City
5. Grand Theft Auto: The Lost and Damned
6. Grand Theft Auto: The Ballad of Gay Tony
7. Grand Theft Auto: Vice City Stories
8. Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas Stories
9. Grand Theft Auto: Vice City Stories
10. Grand Theft Auto: Vice City



PS2 GETS OWN MIAMI VICE

Despite rumors and hopeful wishes, **Rockstar's** smash hit series **Grand Theft Auto** is staying on the **PlayStation 2**. **Sony** has carjacked the franchise exclusively for itself – until October of 2004. The series is going back to the future, as **Grand Theft Auto: Vice City** (coming October 22) is set in an era only Don Johnson's mother could love – the '80s.

Details are scarce on the game so far, but it is expected to run off of its predecessor's engine, making it a veritable Crockett to GTA III's Tubbs. Still, Rockstar Games' President, **Sam Houser**, has promised improvements that are going to "surpass [GTA III] as we set our sights on making an even more revolutionary gaming experience." This will be due to *Vice City's* size, freedom, and improved gameplay.



PRICE CUTS FOR ALL CONSOLES

Sony has fired the first salvo in the console price war by lowering the cost of the **PlayStation 2**. The platform will now retail for \$199, a savings of \$100. Matching the company's pre-E3 move, competitors **Microsoft** and **Nintendo** both lowered the price of their systems – making the **Xbox** \$199 and keeping the **GameCube** the cheapest unit at \$149. Around the world, all three manufacturers have lowered the cost of their next-gen consoles in various territories, but this is the first such reduction here in America.

These moves have been rumored and speculated upon for many months now, with each one occurring for different reasons. Sony was considered to be in the driver's seat, since the PS2 has sold many more units than the other two systems combined. In fact, there was some thought that the company wouldn't have to lower the price of the platform simply because it was selling well anyway. This move, however, will only serve to further widen the gap. For Nintendo, talk of a reduced GameCube began when officials openly admitted that it was something they would seriously consider if Sony did so first. Of course, it's a smart move altogether for Nintendo; ensuring that its console remains the cheapest on the market. In Microsoft's case, it may be in an effort to shift more units. Global predictions for the Xbox were officially scaled back months ago – barely six months into the unit's life.

Also costing you less from now on will be various other Sony products. The original **PS-X** has been slashed from \$99.99 to \$49.99, and along with it, the **PS-X/LCD** screen combo pack is now \$149. Both the PS2 **memory card** and the **Dual Shock 2** controller have been reduced to \$24.95. Not to be outdone, Nintendo has now priced its **GameCube controller** at \$24.95 as well. Rumor has it that Sony is considering dropping the suggested retail price of the software for the PlayStation 2, down from \$49.99 to an as of yet undetermined price point.

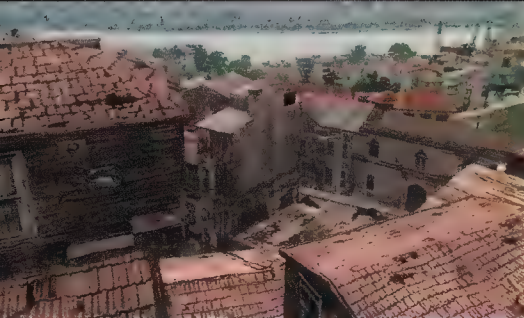
TANNER'S BACK ON THE STREETS

Smarting a little from having some of its gangland thunder stolen by **Grand Theft Auto III**, **Infogrames** and developer **Reflections** are working hard to recapture their territory in this fall's **Driver 3** for the **PlayStation 2**. Of course, the studio has been working hard on **Stuntman** (turn to page 78 for the review), but the energy **Reflections** is putting into Tanner's newest undercover mission is even greater.

It is conceivable, in fact, that **Stuntman**'s vehicular physics on the PS2 are the blueprint for some equally insane **Driver 3** objectives.



The last time we checked in with Tanner on the **PS-X**, he'd just been allowed out of the confines of his ride; letting him car jack any vehicle on the road. Sound familiar? Well, we expect this freedom to continue to produce a third **Driver** title (with locations in Miami, Nice, Istanbul, and more) that can hopefully push the already lofty boundaries left by **Grand Theft Auto III**.



THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE UGLY

BAD – The **World Wrestling Federation** has been forced to change its moniker to the **WWE** (the new word being Entertainment) because of the **World Wildlife Fund**. Rumor has it the party-pooping hippies disagreed with the likes of Jake "The Snake" Roberts. What's next? **Koko B. Ware the Rainbow Warrior**?

GOOD – **Raccoon City** zombies infest **PS2**'s online world in **Resident Evil Online** sometime in the future. Four-player split screen, dozens of zombies on screen, and a few freaked out citizens wrapped in a **Code: Veronica**-esque shroud.



Resident Evil Online

BAD – Where was **Dino Crisis 3**? Last **E3** the game was touted as an **Xbox** exclusive, now it's nowhere to be found.

GOOD – Konami has committed to a new Snake title in 2003 called **Metal Gear Solid 2 Substance** for the **PS2**, **Xbox**, and **PC**. This will be a "derivative" **MGS**, while original sequels will come out every two years, thus giving us a **Metal Gear** a year! An online **Metal Gear Solid 2** is being contemplated.

UGLY – Former child stars will do almost anything to cling to fame. **Gary Coleman** has signed up to appear as himself in the **PC** first-person shooter **Postal 2**. Gary: Don't quit your day job. Oh yeah, clawing your way back into the limelight is your day job.



LOOSE TALK

Wherever there's a juicy rumor in the industry, **Game Informer** experts are on it like a fly on stink. If loose lips are spraying hot gossip, we're sucking up the secret saliva and drooling it all over this section. **Loose Talk** exposes inside rumors for all to see. These leads may turn out to be 100% untrue, but then again, they could also be dead honest, and you've just learned about them months before anyone else!

Japanese developers are apparently not too high on making games for the **Xbox**. **Loose Talk** has heard that support for the system across the Pacific will dry up after this year.

Bye-bye Brett. **Acclaim** has sacked its **NFL Quarterback Club** franchise – not only for this year, but for the foreseeable future as well.

With **EA's Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2** still waiting to come out in September, the company is already looking beyond it for the next **NFS**. Not surprisingly, it will incorporate more of a **Grand Theft Auto III** feel.

Worlds of Warcraft was a solid title on the **E3** showfloor, but don't expect to get your hands on it this year. The games' number of races is still up in the air, and we've been told that "next E3" will have it in its proper form.

Bam Entertainment may take a bump for fans of the Japanese title **Fire Pro Wrestling**. The game is wildly successful over there, and enjoys a healthy cult following on these shores, so a next-gen console edition of the series is being considered.



VIDEO GAME TRIVIA

The *Star Wars* universe amasses an eclectic cast of lame and badass characters. If you're truly skilled like the courageous Jek Porkins, then answering all ten correctly should be a breeze; but if you're simply a game poser, you may discover you're as ignorant as that dolt, Jar Jar.

QUESTION 1: The Japanese use a different name when referring to arcades. What do they call them?

- A. Game Entertainment Stations
- B. Video Game Halls
- C. Game Centers
- D. Interactive Cafes

QUESTION 2: The S.T.A.R.S. team has been battling the undead since the inception of *Resident Evil*. Do you know what the S.T.A.R.S. acronym stands for?

- A. Squadron To Assassinate Riotous Scum
- B. Studs Taking A Rifle Seriously
- C. Specially Trained Attack Reconnaissance Soldiers
- D. Special Tactical and Rescue Squad

QUESTION 3: People who already use Internet2 have access to insanely high speed of this data transfer?

- A. 150 mbs
- B. 550 mbs
- C. 1.2 gbs
- D. 2.4 gbs

QUESTION 4: Who developed the first holographic home video game system, which never actually released, and what was the system's name?

- A. Atari, Specter
- B. Sega, Time Traveler
- C. Nintendo, HoloBoy
- D. Intellevision, LaserTV



Can you guess the maker, and name of the system?

QUESTION 5: What image appeared on the cover of the first issue of *Nintendo Power* in July of 1988?

- A. The Legend of Zelda
- B. Super Mario Bros. 2
- C. Metroid
- D. Kid Icarus

QUESTION 6: What is the name of the *Street Fighter* character who appeared only in the *Street Fighter: The Movie* video game, but in none of the other SF titles?

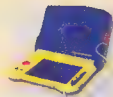
- A. T.Hawk
- B. Sawada
- C. Unen
- D. Eagle

QUESTION 7: Nintendo implemented quality control back in the NES days. It did this by limiting the number of titles a company could release in a year. To maximize its profits, Konami had to publish its games under a second name? What was this name?

- A. Flying Edge
- B. Ultra
- C. LJN
- D. Arena

QUESTION 8: Over the years, Sega has released a number of systems that failed terribly. What is the name of this lesser-known failure?

- A. Sega Cybiko
- B. Sega Pippin
- C. Sega Visions
- D. Sega Pico



This system was originally developed for younger children.

QUESTION 9: Who was the developer of original hit game *Frogger*?

- A. Sega
- B. Atari
- C. Taito
- D. Williams



Who is this outspoken activist?

- A. Will Wright
- B. John Carmack
- C. Cliff Bleszinski
- D. American McGee

QUESTION 10: Tired of living in Hollywood's second-rate shadow, this developer said, in regards to establishing an identity for video games, "We are our own future and it's time we take our place at the forefront of the entertainment industry." Who is he?

CHANGING OF THE GUARD AT NINTENDO



Nintendo's president of over 50 years, **Hiroshi Yamauchi**, has stepped down in favor of replacement **Satoru Iwata**. Yamauchi has previously talked of retirement before, but with the **GameCube** and **Game Boy Advance** now released, the man who has been with Nintendo since even before its involvement with video games is saying goodbye. Yamauchi's son-in-law and former **Nintendo of America** President, **Minoru Arakawa**, retired earlier this year.

Hiroshi Yamauchi's infamous history as a hard-nosed businessman has spawned a reputation that he himself will not deny. He's done everything from insult **Sony** and **Microsoft** for their attempts at entering the gaming market, to having his own relatives fired in order to solidify his control within the company. However cruel his methods may seem, though, Nintendo's success under his guidance cannot be questioned. It was Yamauchi who got the ball rolling by hiring a recent college graduate named **Shigeru Miyamoto**, and by supporting **Donkey Kong**. Yamauchi sent his son-in-law Arakawa to America and rode him to make the **Famicom** (named the **Nintendo Entertainment System** here) a hit in the US amidst an industry-wide slump.

With NOA's Arakawa gone, and now Yamauchi, the torch has definitely been passed to a new generation of Nintendo leadership.



89% of Chet's emails simply say: "Who the hell are you?"

89% of them don't know Chet's already a GI vet

0% of games reviewed this month sounded better when accompanied by the constant chirping of Justin's crickets

2% of work got done the day *Attack of the Clones* debuted

80% of editors thought E3 was solid, if a little unspectacular

Score & Rank



0
Jar Jar
Binks



1-2
Salacious
Crumb



3-4
Nute
Gunray



5-6
IG-88



7-8
Jango Fett



9
Darth
Vader



10
Jek
Porkins

DATA FILE

► **The Matrix** is going online. Warner Bros. is working with the directors of the Wachowski brothers to set up the film franchise in a pay-to-play MMORPG world that may begin as early as the end of this year. No specific platform(s) have been named.

► Massively multiplayer online role-player **Star Wars Galaxies** is spreading at the speed of light. Once only for PC, the game will now appear on the Xbox, PS2, and GameCube. These will be different than the PC edition.

► **Take 2** has announced a 2003 multi-format sequel for **Max Payne**. The company has even gone so far as to purchase the rights to it and all things related to it for \$34 million in cash and stock from the developer. The GI editors would gladly give up our likeness, and perhaps souls, for half of that chunk o' change.

► **EA**, **Xbox**, **Seamus Blackley**, and **Kevin Bachus** are in cahoots with **Hall-Of-Fame's J. Mark Wood**, and have announced their new company, **Capital Entertainment Group**. Seamus won't develop games, per se, but will instead help fund and find publishers for studios' ideas. CEO plans to have titles on Xbox, PlayStation 2, GameCube, and PC.

► Not a studio that hasn't even released a game yet, **Retro** is sure doing well. **Nintendo** has just purchased 55 million shares of the developer, making it a wholly owned subsidiary of the company. **Retro** is currently working on **Metroid Prime** for the GameCube.

► Original **EverQuest** gurus **Brad McQuaid** and **Jeff Butler** and their **Sigil Games Online** have signed a deal with **Microsoft Game Studios** to produce a massively multiplayer online role-playing game for the PC. Specific title(s) have not been announced.

► **Nintendo's Kirby** will be sucking kids in with an animated TV show, entitled **Kirby: Right Back at Ya!** on Saturday mornings. Starting this September, the purple's pink color, it's said, to have made lavender more Barney red with rage.

► Wonder Woman powers have been activated for **Midway**. The publisher has signed up **DC's Justice League of America** for some games based on both the comic and animated TV series. Is this a precursor to a **Hawkgirl** movie?

Name That Game, Knewen

STRADE KIS



NAMCO'S NEW STAR FOX

Following last month's news that **Nintendo** and **Sega** would be working on a new **F-Zero** title for the **GameCube** and arcade, **Namco** will get in on the action with an all-new **Star Fox** title in April 2003 in Japan. This vid will return to the series' space shooter roots, unlike the upcoming **Star Fox Adventures: Dinosaur Planet**, and will include a four-player option.

This new relationship is a result of Namco, Sega, and Nintendo jointly developing the **Triforce** arcade board. In total, Namco will develop 14 titles for the GameCube and Game Boy Advance, including **Soul Calibur 2** and new editions for the **Ridge Racer** and **Tales of Destiny** series. Namco has stated that it will put its Ace Combat team on the upcoming next-gen **Star Fox**, and will not utilize Nintendo's staff that worked on **Star Fox 64**.

ACTIVISION SWALLOWS EXTREME COMPETITION

Activision's Tony Hawk's Pro Skater franchise is the undisputed leader in extreme sports titles, and has influenced many other games. It did, however, find good competition in **Acclaim's Dave Mirra** series of BMX games. Now Activision has turned an adversary into an ally in a bold move that will make it almost unchallenged in the genre. **Mirra's** developer, **Z-Axis**, has become a wholly-owned subsidiary of Activision.

Acclaim will still publish **Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX XXX** and **Aggressive Inline** (see pages 25 and 81, respectively, for more on these games), but a spokesperson for the company told us that those will basically be the last from Z-Axis under the Acclaim banner. The publisher does own the tools and technology behind the **Dave Mirra** franchise should they elect to continue producing **Mirra** titles with a different development team.




A SIGHT UNSEEN

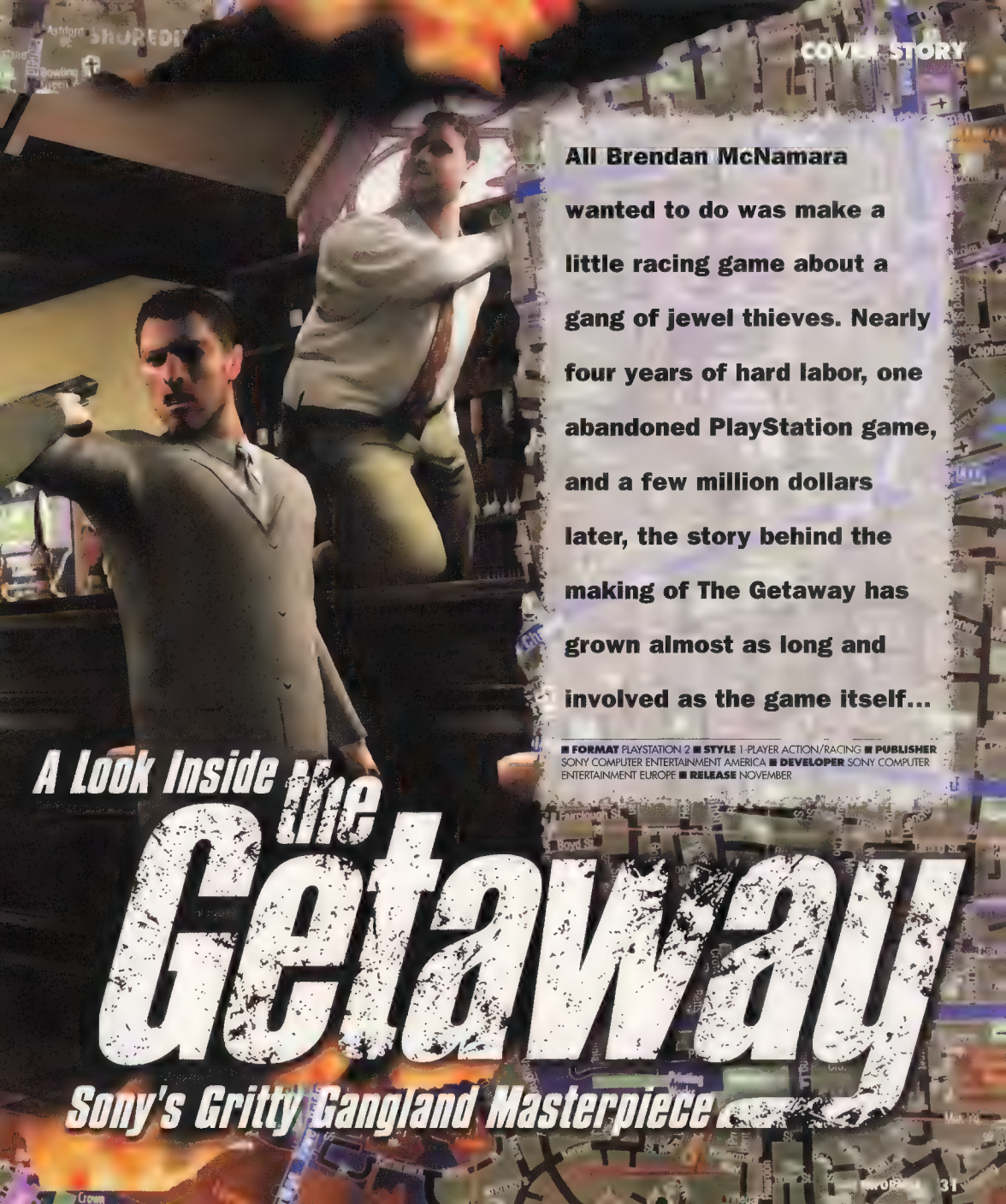
Some college girls call themselves goths, always wear black, and mope around depressed on a diet of eyeliner, Wicca jewelry, and bad music. Others, like **The Unseen's** Moira, however, also have better things to do, such as ridding the world of an invisible force known as The Ashen Order in this upcoming **Xbox** title developed by **Tremor Entertainment**.

Only Moira can detect the minions that have infested our everyday lives, and it is up to her to rid our world of them through a combination of quick moves and magical attacks in this third-person action/adventure title for Spring 2003.





London's Burning



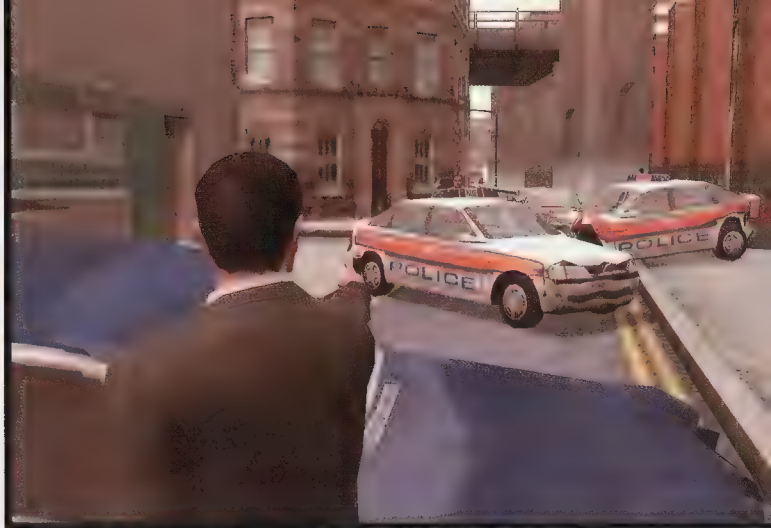
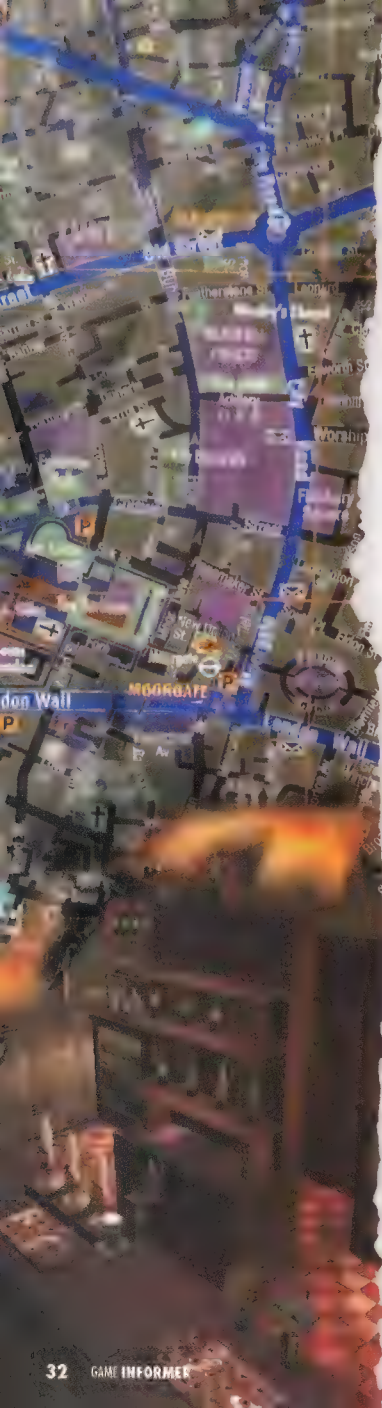
All Brendan McNamara wanted to do was make a little racing game about a gang of jewel thieves. Nearly four years of hard labor, one abandoned PlayStation game, and a few million dollars later, the story behind the making of The Getaway has grown almost as long and involved as the game itself...

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2 ■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA ■ **DEVELOPER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT EUROPE ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER

A Look Inside the

The Getaway

Sony's Gritty Gangland Masterpiece



It started simply enough, as McNamara, a brawny Australian possessed of a rather unassuming manner, and his team began work on a new game that was to be a follow-up to their most recent title, Porsche Challenge, which had been released to middling success in both the US and Europe. Before that, Rapid Racer (a slightly above-average boat-racing title) never made it to American shores.

Looking to expand their scope beyond the traditional (and rather modest) racing games that made up their previous works, the team decided on tackling a project that would incorporate a driving-based mission interwoven with a cinematic backstory. Inspired by the classic "heist" films of the sixties and seventies, they soon settled on casting the player as a getaway driver employed by an English underworld organization. "The first level was set in London," recalls McNamara, "and one of the first jobs you did was rob the crown jewels from the Tower of London. You had to drive them across town, to the East End, and do a jump onto a ferry. We had a couple playable levels, and thought that it was good fun. It had elements of The Italian Job and things like that." On a recent visit to the Sony offices, we were shown a video of the original Getaway in action, and the game looked as if it would have compared favorably to other PlayStation racers of its day.

Sadly, all this work would be for naught. Just as The Getaway (as the team had tentatively titled the project) was beginning to come into focus, fellow UK developer Reflections Interactive unveiled Driver, a similarly-styled mission-based racer that was to become one of the breakout hits of 1999. Although McNamara and his team had no inkling that Driver was imminent, it was readily apparent that it bore an uncomfortably close resemblance to the game that they had only just begun.

Suddenly, The Getaway had gone from being perceived as a groundbreaking title, to just another of the Driver clones that would surface in the wake of Reflection's successful franchise. "We

saw Driver come in," comments McNamara, "and thought that it looked like it was going to be really good and that they were further ahead of us, so that was a big decision at that point as to where we were going to go with [The Getaway]." At this critical juncture, the choice became obvious. All progress on the project up to that point would be scrapped, and a new game would have to be designed and built from the ground up – this time on Sony's powerful new PlayStation 2 console.

Instead of becoming discouraged at this apparent setback, McNamara took the opportunity to reevaluate his goals for The Getaway. The processing capabilities of the PlayStation 2 represented a vast opening of possibilities for game developers, and he wanted a piece of the action. It was clear that a simple "pizza delivery" driving design would not be enough to make an impact in the rapidly evolving next generation video game market.

"The PS2 came in at that point, and we thought, 'Where would we like to go with this if we had a chance?'" elaborates McNamara. "Some of the guys built Piccadilly Circus, and we just saw how potentially amazing it could be. So, gradually it grew into the kind of vision we have now. It was just a lot of freedom, really, from what was possible on the first PlayStation."

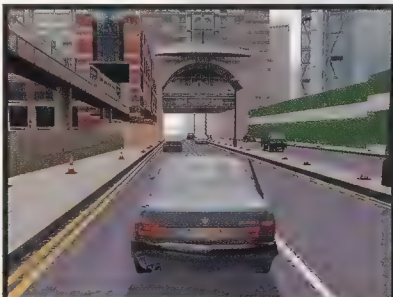
This new vision would ultimately result in The Getaway in its current form – a game that combines third-person action, racing, and cinematic cutscenes to an almost unprecedented degree. At



the time, the idea of blending two completely different gameplay styles into one package was a daunting proposition, but fortunately, Sony management had faith that the team could deliver on its promises, and gave McNamara the go-ahead to venture into uncharted waters. The Getaway staff grew to accommodate its new ambitions, adding 16 programmers (bringing the total up to 18), as well as numerous animators, designers, and other personnel.

Although its roots are firmly planted in the driving genre (an element of gameplay that still comprises nearly half of the total experience), this new Getaway was conceived more as an interactive crime movie than a simple action game. Like any good film, it would need an engrossing plot, a compelling setting, memorable action sequence, and, of course, some wild car chases. This was a tall order, and at first even some of the team members expressed doubts that it could be accom-

plished. "The coding team, unfortunately, was a little bit reluctant to do it, because they'd never had that kind of a challenge before," notes McNamara. "They'd mainly done racing, so it took awhile to convince the guys we should do this kind of hybrid, mixed genre game. But it was in the design from the inception, really...that was part of the beauty of what you could do on PS2."



Motoring



The Getaway will feature a good cross section of the automotive universe, and every one of the vehicles will be fully licensed, unlike the mystery mobiles of GTA III. At present time, there are 65 vehicles in the game, although that number could change, as all the licensing deals are yet to be finalized. As these production shots show, the rides are fully modeled, both inside and out. In the game, they also display some nice reflective environment mapping and realistic damage.



To ensure that *The Getaway* wasn't just a hodgepodge of disparate gameplay elements glued together by a few hackneyed cutscenes, McNamara and writing partner Katie Ellwood toiled over a 90-page script.

They took inspiration from the films of English bad boy director/Madonna breeding partner Guy Ritchie (*Snatch*; *Lock, Stock, and Two Smoking Barrels*), in addition to earlier masterpieces of British crime cinema as *The Long Good Friday* (starring Bob Hoskins) and *Get Carter* (the 1968 Michael Caine original, not the Sylvester Stallone travesty of a few years past).

The end result is a plot that is as compelling as it is complex, tracing the saga of Mark Hammond, an ex-con recently released from prison who is

determined to rebuild his life as a law-obeying citizen. Inevitably, outside forces, in the form of aging gangland boss Charlie Jolson, conspire to drag him back into a web of criminal intrigue. On the streets of London, Jolson's thugs (including the comely femme fatale Yasmin) murder his wife, and take his only son hostage. In order to get his son back; Hammond must take on a string of increasingly dangerous missions on behalf of Jolson, who is desperately trying to stave off a number of younger, more vicious gangs that threaten to further infringe on his ever-dwindling territory. This is the basic premise of *The Getaway*, but there is much more to the tale. Once you've finished twelve stages as Mark, you take control of another character, Frank Carter—a vigilante cop obsessed with bringing

Jolson and his gang to justice. Much like Quentin Tarantino's epochal *Pulp Fiction*, these two storylines intersect with one another, sometimes showing Frank dealing with the aftermath of events that you caused as Mark. It's brilliantly conceived, and tailored to make sure that the cinematics enhance, rather than detract from the gameplay experience.

"We've made a lot of effort to make the story fit the mission ideas that we had," says McNamara. "That's a complicated way to write a story, but it seems to work for us. It makes it, in a way, more linear, because you have to do things that get you to the next story point, but, hopefully, if the story is compelling enough, we'll get to a much bigger audience than we'd normally reach."



Virtual London



Comparing this photo of the legendary Big Ben with this shot taken from the game will give you some idea as to just how realistic *The Getaway* is

Without a doubt, *The Getaway* contains the largest and most detailed city environment ever created. While at Sony's offices, we drove around looking for various landmarks in the game and actually managed to find the hotel we were staying in. To draw people's attention to just how accurate the game is, *The Getaway* will feature a Tour Bus mode in which a player rides around the city, competing to take the best pictures of various attractions and historic buildings like Pokémon Snap for adults. Also, there will be a Black Cab mode, in which you must attempt to bilk ugly Americans out of their money by taking the most circuitous route possible to their destination.



The Cast


 UNDERGROUND


Co-stars Ricky Hards (Charlie Jolson) and Anna Edwards (Yasmin) pose at center with some other members of Jolson's gang, the Bathnal Street Mob. Reportedly, Sony executives are so pleased with *The Getaway*'s cinematics that they are considering shooting a feature film based on the franchise. Brendan McNamara told us that the film would be shot in conjunction with the planned *Getaway* prequel, using the same script and actors. The plot will center the story of crimelord Charlie Jolson in the mid-1980s, recounting events that lead up to action of the current game.

With the conceptual foundation firmly in place, *The Getaway*'s level designers began the arduous job of recreating modern-day London – the setting for the game's bloody exploits. In order to accurately capture the hustle and bustle of one of the world's largest cities, the staff spent months walking the streets, taking literally thousands of reference shots with digital cameras.

To give us some idea of how obsessive this effort was, a team member we spoke to informed us that the crew wore out no less than seven cameras during the duration of the project. Using these shots as a starting point, buildings, encompassing everything from well-known tourists attractions like the London Eye to slums filled with run-down council estates, were modeled by hand. Then, each building was painstakingly placed on an actual street map of London. The effect is staggering. Driving around this virtual city is in every way like the real deal, and, unlike in other games of its ilk, the entire city is open from the beginning. All told, this recreation encompasses a 20 square mile area, with over 80 miles of road, streets, and alleys to be explored.

As it became apparent that *The Getaway* was a game that was attempting to raise the bar in terms of production values, it became equally obvious that many traditional development techniques were not going to be adequate in bringing the team's vision to life. "We could build such incredibly rich environments," remembers McNamara. "[But when] we started building characters like we normally did in games, we ended up with an amazing city filled with people that looked like they were a generation removed from *Quake*. They weren't that realistic. We thought, 'Well, if we want it to look as real as the buildings, then we should scan people.' Once we went down that route, we knew we could get incredibly realistic people. It then became a logical thing to look for characters and actors that we could scan in and use for the narrative and also for the in-game action."





Face to Face

To get these remarkable likenesses of their motion-capture talent implemented into the game, The Getaway's animators employed a new facial scanning system that uses a common consumer digital camera to capture face model data. The actors posed wearing shower caps, with a fine grid projected over their faces. Then, the photos were uploaded into a software program that converts the picture data into an accurate facial model. As you can see, the resemblance is eerie.



Just as in a Hollywood action movie, a cast would need to be assembled. Unlike most games, in which the acting talent is employed strictly for the voice-overs, these thespians would be involved in every aspect of the process: recording, motion-capture, and actually having their physical likeness scanned into the game.

Like many elements of The Getaway's development, this would prove to be easier in theory than in practice. Traditional optical motion-capture systems (which require the actors to wear suits outfitted with reflective balls which allow special cameras to pick up on their motion) proved to be insufficient, as they could only record two actors at once, and precluded the use of most large props. "We spent a lot of money doing optical mo-cap tests. We spent a lot of time as well," comments Senior Animator Gavin Moore. "We were paying all this money for these actors, and they can act, and we wanted those performances. The problem was that, if you stuck them in an optical system, we couldn't have all the actors in that system together."

Looking for a solution, the animators looked towards a new, and untested, magnetic motion-capture system that proved to be a great success. Working with two technology firms, they developed a motion-capture pipeline that allowed them to not only track the movements of up to five actors at once, but also record dialogue with boom microphones. "We recorded the sound while we were doing the motion-capture, which is inherently important because sound is 70 percent of animation," claims Moore. "So, instead of recording the sound later in the booth, which is just taking away from the inherent ability of the actor, because you're removing them from the situation, you're removing them from the people they're acting with. This way, we could actually get all the actors in one go. That meant that we got real performance out of them."

This approach proved fruitful, and enabled the actors to turn in performances that are more real and immediate than the wooden and stilted cutscenes that have plagued games

since the inception of the CD-ROM era. Gavin Moore expresses satisfaction with the cast's efforts. "They're pretty intuitive as actors. With [motion-capture], you can get across more with your body. I think it's like the difference between stage acting and film acting. If you act on the stage, every movement you do has to be very large, very exaggerated, and very over-the-top, because everyone is so far away from you. If you're doing film acting, the camera can be right in your face. Even if you move your head an inch to the left, it looks like three or four feet on the screen. Your movements have to be subtler. I think that [mo-cap work] is a mixture of the two. It sits somewhere in between."

After overcoming no small number of struggles, both personal and technical, The Getaway seemed to be finally coming into shape. The team had no doubt that they were creating a game that could be potentially regarded as a truly landmark event. Then, something happened. That something was a little game called Grand Theft Auto III, Rockstar's breakthrough hit of last year. The game quickly became a word-of-mouth sensation, topping the charts, causing controversy in the press, and is now well on its way to over 6 million units sold worldwide. Its genre-busting mix of driving, gunplay,

In Motion





and tough-guy attitude was superbly done, but also similar in both spirit and design to *The Getaway*. Considering that the original *Getaway* had been shelved in order to avoid being tagged as a Driver knock-off, the team was understandably disheartened by the fact that, in some ways, *GTA III* had beaten them to the punch. When we asked Brendan McNamara about the game that *The Getaway* will now be inevitably compared to, he seemed surprisingly philosophical about the competition. "When *GTA III* came along," McNamara said. "The whole team was getting depressed for three weeks saying, 'Well, you know, *GTA III* is out and it's a really great game.' But, as time has gone on, people have seen that, in a lot of areas, we've really taken it to the next level. That's the thing about great games, is that they inspire us to go even further. *GTA*, we think it's a great game, but we think that all the interior action that we have in our game is comparable to what you have in *Metal Gear Solid*. So, if you can mix that kind of action that you found in *Driver*, with the interior stealth action that you get in *Metal Gear*, then you seem to be on to a bit of a winner."

While we'll reserve our final judgement until a reviewable copy of *The Getaway* is in hand, what we've seen so far is extremely impressive. Graphically, it's a clear step forward from the unspectacular visuals of *GTA III*. The character models are striking, much better than the cartoonish, blocky denizens of *Liberty City*, and they move with

a fluid and natural ease. The environments are equally intricate, and anyone who has had the good fortune to travel to London will notice just how faithfully it has been rendered in the game. In fact, one of our only minor criticisms of the game was that we often found ourselves becoming lost in the metropolitan sprawl. This is mostly due to the incomprehensible layout of the real-life city, but the on-screen directional icon that guides you through the streets sometimes seemed to be a

bit vague as to where you should actually make a turn. The *Getaway* staff is still tweaking this feature, and may even include a map of London that would be accessible via the pause menu.

In terms of storytelling, *The Getaway* shines. It has the same hard-boiled, campy appeal that made games like *Max Payne* so popular, but the dual plot-lines and the way in which the game's 24 stages (which comprise 52 missions in total) are divided between the twin sagas of Mark Hammond and Frank Carter is ingenious. It's not Oscar material, to be sure, but the seedy London ambience and humorously profane Cockney dialogue more than makes up for any of the expected logical inconsistencies.

The gameplay seems, for the most part, excellent, and succeeds in fixing some of the flaws that have plagued other games of its stripe. A great deal of effort was made to ensure that the game's 60-odd cars handle like the real things, and it shows. The handling is almost more akin to a proper racing game than the arcade-style mechanics of *GTA III* – sometimes to a fault. While the sports cars cut razor-sharp corners, as they should; economy hatchbacks also handle just like the real thing – poorly. Again, the programming team has been working to adjust the difficulty, hoping to avoid frustrating amateur motorists. Of course, driving on the left side of the road will always seem just a bit wrong, but that's what we get for being Yanks.

While every element of the game is solid, *The Getaway*'s most notable accomplishment is incorporating interior action into this already-heady mix of driving and action. Gone are the simple storefronts of *GTA III*. Now you can run amok through scores of rooms and corridors. Thankfully, the weapon targeting is leagues better than in *GTA III* as well, which should help it avoid some of the frustration found in that

game's more challenging missions. While on the run, you can easily toggle your auto-targeting between multiple enemies. If you want to take a more measured approach to meting out retribution, you can use the X button to back up against a doorway, then use the shoulder buttons to quickly duck out and expel a few round into the enemy around the corner. Some of the interior missions will require stealth and cunning as well, such as donning a uniform and sneaking your way into a police station to assassinate a high-ranking officer.

While the comparisons are inevitable, *The Getaway* is not a carbon copy of *Grand Theft Auto III*. It's more cinematic, and, as a result, much more linear and serious-minded. As such, it doesn't offer the near-total freedom of gameplay that was so addicting to millions, but it should be a grand experience in its own right. A better way to think of *The Getaway* is that it represents a synthesis of the best parts of *Driver* and *GTA III*, which is – considering that those were two of the most acclaimed games of the past few years – a tremendous accomplishment.

Certainly this achievement came at a cost, both financially and mentally, for the people that made it, but it appears that their labors were not in vain.



Talking with Brendan McNamara, he seemed almost wistful when we asked him about his thoughts on the prospect of actually finishing the project that has taken up the last few years of his life. "It kind of feels like when you're ending high school or ending college. You're on something for so long, and you have good friends, and now it's going to end. *The Getaway*, after three and a half years, feels like that. It's really intimidating to think about starting something new, especially after how long this has taken."

It certainly wasn't an easy ride, but Gavin Moore believes that the end result is well worth the effort. "I can't think of any decision that was ever the easiest way through," he remarked. "It's always been the difficult way through, but that's why it's so exciting and why this game is really starting to push the boundaries. I think if we'd taken the easy route, I don't think we'd be half as good as we are."

The magnetic motion-capture procedures used in the making of *The Getaway* gave the animators a greater degree of freedom, allowing them to use larger groups of actors, constructed sets, and real props during the capture process. Instead of using optical data, this technique projects a magnetic force around the actors, who wear suits outfitted with tiny magnets that allows the animators to track their movement in 3D space. Their pioneering work has caught the eye of many in both the video game industry and Hollywood, and one company in New Zealand is planning on doing a live CG cartoon utilizing a set-up similar to the one used in *The Getaway*.





THE BIG SHOW ROCKS LOS ANGELES





With no new console being unveiled, E3 2002 did not reach the level of excitement we'd witnessed in the past few years. However, this is not necessarily a bad thing. The hype surrounding the various competitors in the console wars has waned, as consumers have been able to make their own decisions about which system is the king of the gaming hill. Even so, the booths were bigger, the parties more grandiose, and the general feeling of excess that is quintessentially E3 was unchanged.

Although it's frequently said, this E3 really was all about games, and plenty of them. As developers gradually begin to master the development hurdles of all three platforms, the overall quality of software has skyrocketed. It would be safe to say that - across the board - this show offered up more great titles than we've ever seen before. Although there was no "event game" (like Metal Gear Solid 2) that elevated itself above the crowd, virtually everywhere you turned, there was a great title waiting to be taken through its paces. This phenomenon wasn't just limited to blue-chip publishers like EA and Activision; even the smallest companies had something of merit to show off to the assembled media.

Walking around the convention halls, this impressive display of gaming goodness was almost overwhelming. For the average gamer, three days was simply not enough time to sample everything this show had to offer. Whether your loyalties lie with PlayStation 2, Xbox, Nintendo, or the PC, E3 is an indication that this fall is going to produce a bumper crop of amazing games. Throw in the announcement of welcome price drops for all major systems, Sony and Microsoft revealing their exciting online strategies for the latter part of the year, and one could even venture to call this the best E3 ever. These are bold words, indeed, but, after pouring over this story, *GI* News, and our well-stocked Reviews section, we'd be surprised if you didn't agree.

As always, *Game Informer* trekked into the darkest recesses of the Los Angeles convention center to report on all the action. Over the next few pages, we're going to break down the show, shedding light on how the three major players fared, as well as let you in on our picks for the Best of Show.



FEATURE

Views From the Floor



JASON LERNER

"I'm a PlayStation guy, so I suppose I'm biased. I love PS2, I think they have a great lineup [I'm excited about] anything that Square Soft does. I came to see Kingdom Hearts. I'm a little put off because it looks like a Disney movie. That's fine, but I just hope they don't go down the line of making kids' games and stuff."



STEVE MARTIN (NO RELATION)

"I've been really impressed. It's different from last year because that was two new hardware launches. This one has been more about the games, really. Have I been really impressed with anything? Zelda. I was a bit weary of - before it, with the look of the new game. But, it seems to be fine. I wasn't sure about the new [graphics], but as soon as you start playing, it's like Zelda."



GILBERT DE LA HAZA

"This is my third year here. It's not as spectacular as three years ago. I don't know if that has anything to do with the economy being down or not. This is the year of sequels. Building on what's worked in the past. Lots of movie games."

PlayStation Sony

Although Sony's plans for its PlayStation 2 online initiative were definitely one of the hotbutton issues at E3, the Japanese electronic giant came to the show with one message for the gaming public: We are on top, and we're going to stay there for the foreseeable future. As a result, it sometimes seemed as though its press conference was geared more towards industry analysts than the gaming press. Kaz Hirai, President of Sony Computer Entertainment America, acted as emcee for the proceedings, delivering not rhymes, but page after page of statistics that detailed Sony's domination of the console market. During the presentation, Hirai came off as supremely confident at best, arrogant and imperious at worst. At one point, he even went so far as to claim, "The console wars are over!" To our ears, this seemed

unnecessarily dismissive of two competitors with such deep pockets and technological experience as Nintendo and Microsoft. Whatever it was, it certainly wasn't charming. However, it was impressive, and that is exactly as Sony intended it.

Just a cursory look at the facts presented (30 million PlayStation 2 units shipped worldwide, versus 3.5 million Xbox and 4 million GameCube) should be enough to persuade anyone that it will be very hard indeed to unseat Sony from its perch atop the video game food chain. Of course, the company is not playing it safe, and detailed a new \$250 million marketing campaign planned for this holiday season covering both the PS2 and the PSone that will feature a new slogan, "Live in Your World, Play in Ours." Sony claims this blitz will enable the company to sell another 23 million combined hardware units by the end of fiscal year 2003.

Hirai went on to expound on how this leading market share will allow the company to maintain its unparalleled third-party software support, by offering publishers the biggest installed base of users, and the best chance to bring profitable products to market. A roster of multi-million selling PS2 hits was displayed (including Gran Turismo 3, Metal Gear Solid 2, and Devil May Cry) to emphasize Sony's retail muscle. Hirai went on to say that the company recently had its biggest order for PS2 development kits ever, and then displayed an impressive line-up of PlayStation-exclusive titles to be released by the end of the year — Infogrames'

Stuntman, Sega's Shinobi, and Capcom's Auto Modellista, among others. Then, in what was probably the most significant announcement of the show, he asked Take 2 Interactive CEO Kelly Sumner to stand up, and proclaimed that the Grand Theft Auto series — the hottest franchise in all of gaming — would now be exclusive to the PlayStation 2. You could almost hear a nation of Xbox and GameCube owners cry out in despair.

Sony is not just relying on outside sources for blockbuster software, and the next segment of the conference was devoted to two of the company's internally developed games, Ratchet & Clank and The Getaway. Although Sony has never really been considered an A-list development house, it is making significant strides in this area, and both these titles are a measure of just how far it's come. Hirai closed out this portion of the presentation by boasting that, with help from its third-party partners and the over 30 games developed by the company itself, the PlayStation 2 library should stand at over 400 titles by the end of the fiscal year.

After nearly forty minutes of what was essentially Sony cheerleading, the crowd finally got a look at what it had come to see: Sony's plans for PlayStation 2 online. Hirai detailed Sony's ambitious initiative, with specifics on pricing, ISP compatibility, and launch titles for the network



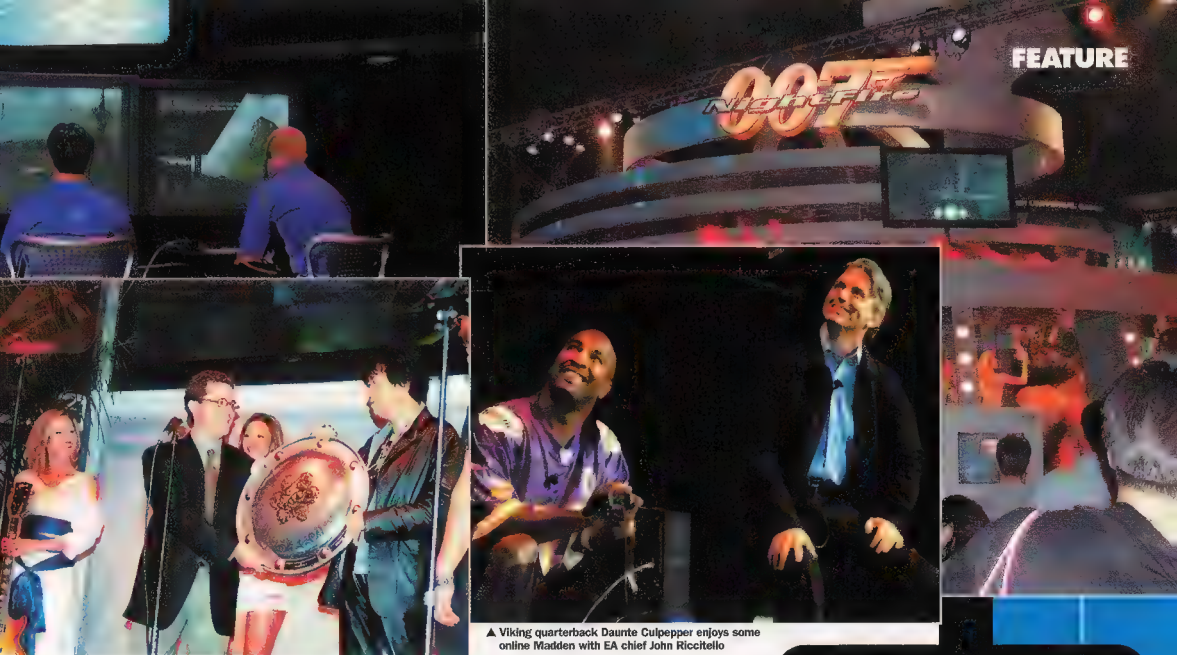
Madden NFL 2003



Onimusha 2



SOCOM US Navy SEALs



▲ Viking quarterback Daunte Culpepper enjoys some online Madden with EA chief John Riccitiello

(for more details, see GI News, page 29). It was a bit dry, and a lackluster demo of SOCOM: US Navy SEALs, in which players' voice-command functions failed to work properly, did little to excite the mass of assembled media. Still, Hirai did manage to poke a few holes in Microsoft's broadband-only Xbox Live strategy, citing figures that seemed to suggest that Sony did not feel that broadband penetration of the market was sufficient to support their large-scale plans.

Then, in a move that electrified a crowd that was in danger of being lulled to sleep by an endless onslaught of facts and figures, EA COO John Riccitiello took the stage and said, "I'd like to show you the debut of Madden on PlayStation 2 Online, and I'd like to show it to you live—a real online test." Conducting the test, he went on to say, was his "lead tester for Madden Football." On cue, Minnesota Vikings quarter Daunte took the stage. Then, on one of the huge monitors hanging above, his opponent, Tennessee

Titans star Jevon Kearse (playing from his home in Orlando), joined the show. Finally, the man himself, John Madden showed up on the Jumbotron to provide color commentary on the match-up. This live demonstration was a daring move on Sony's part, but, aside from some trouble getting Culpepper's television turned on, it was a tremendous success, inciting genuine applause from the crowd as Culpepper returned the opening kick-off for a touchdown. Madden, per usual, dispensed a rambling, bizarre discourse on the unfolding action, attributing Culpepper and Kearse's lightning reflexes on their overdeveloped "optifroculon" nerves. The game itself seemed to run with few hitches, and this daring maneuver proved to be a massive crowd-pleaser. While we still have our doubts as to just how compelling EA's bare-bones Madden online plans will actually be, judged as pure showmanship, this section of the conference was a wild success.

The momentum Sony gathered during its press conference was carried over onto the show floor. Excellent PlayStation 2 product was in abundance at Sony's booth and the third parties'. Among the standouts were Capcom's Devil May Cry 2 video and its cel-shaded racer Auto Modellista, Square's online epic Final Fantasy XI (which was playable on the floor), Sony's War of the Monsters, Konami's old-school redux Contra: Shattered Soldier, and Sierra's promising online title, Tribes Aerial Assault. While there appeared to be a number of genuine PlayStation 2 hits on display, one highly-touted PS2 exclusive, Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness, looked like a disappointment both in terms of graphics and gameplay. Tellingly, this would-be blockbuster's display was a ghost town for most of the show. Still, this was a strong showing for the PlayStation 2 as a whole, and one that bodes well for its continued success in the coming year.

E3 REPORT CARD



While some were a little disappointed that Sony didn't offer up an online plan as comprehensive or ambitious as Microsoft's, it did show us that it is indeed serious about the brave new world of gaming. Broadband is going to be sweet, no doubt, but Sony is probably correct in guessing that it is few years away from eclipsing 56K dial-up as the standard connection speed. It might not be a hardcore gamer's ultimate dream (Sony still had them covered with SOCOM and other broadband-only titles), but, in the end, it's good business.

On the games side of the equation, support seems strong for Sony, with nearly every major publisher delivering a high-profile exclusive to the platform, most importantly the Grand Theft Auto franchise. This dominance in software variety is aided by the company's improving in-house development prowess. We've never considered Sony to be a true powerhouse in this area, but this year's strong showing, led by Ratchet & Clank and The Getaway, shows that this perception will likely change in the next few years. Chalk this up as another victory for Sony, which is rapidly consolidating its lead. If Microsoft's Xbox Live program doesn't strike a serious blow against PS2, and Nintendo fails to make some big moves on the third-party side of its business, these two contenders might have to begin to fight it out for second place.



Tribes Aerial Assault

Xbox Microsoft

Still smarting from

a less-than-stellar performance last year, Microsoft's press conference demonstrated that the Seattle giant has learned a lot from its past mistakes. The previous Xbox showcase had been overlong and marred by some glaring technical errors. Coming back fighting, this year's presentation was fast-paced and to the point, utilizing impressive visual effects displayed on a giant translucent screen.

At the start, a huge build-up of drums swelled, Toe Jam & Earl started rapping, and a swirl of visual and lighting effects worthy of a mid-seventies Elvis show gave Microsoft's Xbox captain Robbie Bach a huge welcome. Bach seemed at ease, even joking about the beginning of last year's conference, when the Xbox unit he was using onstage failed to boot up. Bach continued, discounting the skeptics, saying that the Xbox has "more momentum sooner than any console ever launched," and citing the fact that five Xbox titles have sold more than 500,000 copies, while 20 have sold over 100,000. He was also frank about some of their shortcomings, stating, "People said Japan would be a tough market for us — and they were right. In Japan we understand

that patience and humility are virtues, and we continue to invest in our relationship with legendary Japanese game developers, to give Japanese gamers the kind of cutting-edge entertainment they demand."

Bach was well received by the crowd. However, it was readily apparent that Microsoft had planted many of its people, as well as some Xbox contest winners, in the balcony, most of whom would have probably



Tork



MechAssault



given a standing ovation to a screening of Bill Gates' home movies.

Next up was Ed Fries, who, in an attempt to illustrate the strength of Xbox third-party support, welcomed several of the development world's leading lights, including Capcom's Atsushi Inaba (Steel Battalion) and Sega's Yuji Naka (Sonic the Hedgehog, Phantasy Star Online). Following these introductions was a video that showcased new Xbox exclusive titles Blix: The Time Sweeper, Star Wars: Knights of the

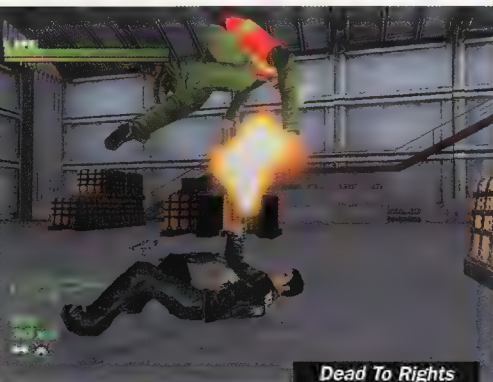
Old Republic, and the very impressive Panzer Dragoon Orta. In addition to these games, Fries promised that there were over 300 Xbox properties currently in development. After another video of upcoming Xbox software, Peter Molyneux and Tecmo's Tomonobu Itagaki expounded on the power of the system, and their highly anticipated Project Ego and Ninja Gaiden, respectively. Finally, it was J Allard's turn to talk Xbox Internet, and he got off to a great start by confirming that an online compatible Halo is on the way. From there, he ran a tape that showed the Colt's Peyton Manning and Seattle's Matt Hasselbeck playing a game of NFL Fever over the Xbox Live network. It was nice, but not nearly as exciting as the next day's live demo of Madden performed at the PS2 conference. Much of Allard's speech focused on Microsoft's dedication to making sure it had the best online technology in the world, claiming that "the widespread adaptation of broadband is inevitable." He also went into detail about how Xbox would provide much of the backend for its third-party software partners, including the customer service, network support, and billing. All in all, it went a long way towards convincing us that Xbox Live will be running hard and fast when it hits the public this September. Adding weight to these words was Robbie Bach, who came back on and pledged that Microsoft has earmarked \$2 billion towards its global Xbox operations over the next five years, including funds for the development of a new console.



Coming out of the conference, the crowd seemed to be enthusiastic about Xbox – a feeling that didn't quite translate into an overwhelming response during the convention itself. While the Xbox booth was well attended, it wasn't mobbed, and many of its first-party games, like Whacked and Kung Fu Chaos, didn't seem to make much of an impression with the E3 audience.

Thankfully, two third-party games, Ubi Soft's jaw-dropping stealth/action juggernaut Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell, and Capcom's insanely ambitious mech simulator Steel Battalion, amazed all who had a chance to play them. Other promising titles included Sega's beautiful Panzer Dragoon Orta, and Peter Molyneux's behind-closed-doors showing of Project Ego and BC.

The biggest disappointment for the Xbox faithful was Bioware's Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic, which looked choppy, simplistic, and dull. Without some serious changes, the game might be a Phantom Menace-sized disappointment for Star Wars fans. Another interesting trend saw Microsoft making a play for Nintendo's younger demographic, with kid-oriented products like the platformer Tork, the mouse-strategy title Sneakers, and the interesting time-twisting action title Blix: The Time Sweeper.



Dead To Rights

Project Ego



E3 REPORT CARD



Better than last year, but Microsoft doesn't come out of E3 with the momentum it needs to overtake Sony, which seems to have cemented its position as the leader in this console showdown. Still, the company made some great strides this year, with an excellently done press conference, and the acquisition of one exclusive third-party title, Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell, that looks like it could be every bit as good as the much-ballyhooed Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty. Two other standouts, Panzer Dragoon Orta and Steel Battalion, were also impressive, but are more likely to be cult classics than commercial blockbusters. While the software showing was strong overall, the conspicuous absence of Halo and Max Payne sequels was disappointing.

On the online side, Microsoft erased any doubts we had about Xbox Live. Sony's mostly narrowband accessibility is certainly the commercially safe approach, but Xbox is shooting for the stars, consequences be damned. We expect that Xbox will be the online console of choice for hardcore gamers, and, if Microsoft can convince more casual fans to take the broadband plunge, it could well be their trump card in their war against PlayStation 2.

FEATURE

Views From the Floor



SIGGI OLAFSSON

"It's big and it's loud, but there doesn't seem to be as many people here as last year. Maybe no one wanted to travel."



MICHAEL JUSENIUS

"I just got back from the Nintendo booth and Wario World looks great. Zelda: A Link to the Past is awesome. Metroid Prime looks really cool, but I didn't get to play it. I like how you see from the view of the helmet, but I was really hoping for a 2D version."



NICK WILSON

"The console war? Total madness. Everyone just dropped their prices so it's really hard to say. Xbox is probably my least favorite at this point and it's the most powerful, but the games are just lacking right now. In terms of the PS2, I actually just got one myself because they dropped the price and I needed a DVD player. GC is probably my favorite among all the consoles – the gameplay is just magnificent. Parties are good. Knees and feet hurt."

Nintendo



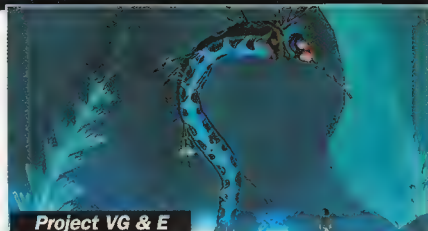
The video game business

has evolved considerably in the past 10 years, but some things in life never change — especially Nintendo press conferences. Big games featuring Mario and Zelda? Check. Emphasis on the company's storied reputation for quality software and legendary franchises? Natch. A standing ovation for Shigeru Miyamoto? You better believe it. A smooth-talking man named Peter expertly dodging questions from the press? Of course (Although this year it was Peter MacDougall instead of Peter Main).

Yes, in the world of Nintendo, all things old are new again, and this year's E3 was no different. Kicking things off was Peter MacDougall, who trumpeted Nintendo's success with the Game Boy

Advance and the "healthy momentum" (define that as you will) of the GameCube. He also went on to term Nintendo's show games as the "the finest line-up of games that we have ever brought to E3. In fact, we think the strongest that anyone has ever brought to E3."

Next, new Nintendo head Satoru Iwata unveiled the company's new buzzword, "Game Giants," a term that refers to their stable of bankable characters. He elabo-



Project VG & E

rated on a new partnership with Namco, which is set to produce a number of GameCube titles, including Soul Calibur 2 (which was also mentioned at Sony's press conference as bound for the PS2), two new RPGs, and an upcoming Star Fox shooter.



Godzilla Destroy All Monsters

Also, he commented on the bright future of the Triforce board, a joint venture between Nintendo, Sega, and Namco, that will produce games for both GameCube and the arcades.

In hopes of encouraging adult gamers that might still view Nintendo as a "kiddle company," MacDougall then showed clips of Resident Evil, Resident Evil O, Eternal Darkness, and the much-

hyped Metroid Prime. Of course, Samus brought the house down as usual, but more on that later. Surprisingly, one of the highlights of the show was a video of some new Game Boy Advance titles. Featured GBA games include The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past, Yoshi's Island, Game & Watch Gallery 4, Golden Sun: The Lost Age, and Disney's Magical Quest. Even more exciting was the all-new Metroid Fusion, a game that looks to continue the series' 2D legacy. As with past Nintendo handheld

ports, A Link To The Past is being supplemented with a four-player link mode, which was demonstrated at the end of the conference by Miyamoto, Capcom director Yoshiaki Okamoto, Sega Amusement Vision head Toshihiro Nagoshi, and Namco president Yuichi Haraguchi.

GameCube/Game Boy Advance "connectivity" was another major theme of the presentation, and clips were showed of several titles, including a pseudo sequel to Kirby Tilt 'n' Tumble, that use the GBA as a controller for the GameCube, with the game action alternating between both screens. This "connectivity" looks pretty neat, to be sure, but that was no reason to make us suffer through a horribly long and excruciatingly cheesy infomercial for Animal Crossing. As last year, Internet connectivity took a back seat, as Nintendo continues its "wait and see" approach to online gaming.

Perhaps sensing that the crowd was growing restless, Shigeru Miyamoto entered from the back of the theater to a Jesus-like reception. Finally, the moment to see Zelda and Mario put through their paces was here, and the fanboys in the audience reached a nearly epileptic state of excitement. Mario looked better than some Internet reports had suggested,



Metroid Prime



Mystic Heroes



The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past



▲ Shigeru Miyamoto, Namco's Youichi Haraguchi, Sega's Toshihiro Nagoshi, and Capcom's Yoshiaki Okamoto

with our hero displaying some cool new moves, including a jetpack boost, a tightrope walk, and an improved wall jump. Aside from some rather uninspired textures, this game looks every bit as fun as we'd hoped. GameCube's *Zelda* was another success, as the game's gorgeous visuals silenced the cynics who have criticized its cartoonish look, and quite simply put every other cel-shaded game we've seen to shame. The only hitch came when Miyamoto ran into a programming bug that prevented him from acquiring the sword he needed to enter the next area of a cavern, which resulted in the demo being cut short. One member of the Game Informer staff witnessed a visibly angry Miyamoto storming out of the Biltmore Hotel a few hours after the conference. Somewhere in Kyoto, a game tester is being fired.

The chance to get some hands-on time with *Zelda* and Mario proved irresistible to the faithful at E3, and Nintendo's booth was literally thronged with people from open until close each day of the show. Fortunately, these games appear even better upon closer inspection, as does Rare's *Star Fox Adventures: Dinosaur Planet*. Even our despised Mario Party 4 looked improved, and may actually be somewhat decent when it's released. On the downside, the surprise GameCube title *Wario World* seemed intriguing, but was obviously very early in its development cycle. Even worse, *Metroid Prime* is shaping up to be one of the biggest disappointments from Nintendo in quite some time. Aside from some astonishing sequences in which you can roll around in the third-person, the game looked like just another average first-person shooter with a slightly clunky targeting system. Not bad, but not the genre-defining hit that Nintendo fans have been expecting.

E3 REPORT CARD

B

More than any other company, Nintendo has an emotional connection with gamers that can't be duplicated. For this reason, the company can get away with things that Sony or Microsoft would be crucified for in the press. Just show us another amazing Mario or *Zelda* game, and all is forgiven. Or is it? Make no mistake – Super Mario Sunshine and The Legend of *Zelda* will be unforgettable experiences, and multi-million unit sellers. But remember, Nintendo had successes with the same franchises during the Nintendo 64 era and never even began to challenge Sony as the leader of the 32-bit marketplace. Although the company says it is serious about cultivating older gamers, this "commitment" basically boils down to a handful of exclusive titles: The Resident Evil series, *Eternal Darkness*, and *Metroid Prime*. Is this enough in the era of *Max Payne* and *Grand Theft Auto III*?

In addition, Nintendo's refusal to acknowledge the growing reality of online gaming may prove to be a grave error. It says that it will wait until it is confident that it can be profitable on the Internet, but by that time Sony and Microsoft will have the network infrastructure and know-how that can only come through experience.

Does this mean Nintendo is finished? Not by a long shot. The Game Boy Advance will continue to be a cash cow, especially with the promising games we saw at E3. While the GameCube will likely never contend for the top spot, Nintendo's amazing in-house development talent will continue to create titles that every hardcore gamer must own. These two strengths should keep the company right where it has been for almost a decade: a very profitable number two.

Age of Mythology

PC

This show was proof that the reports of the demise of PC gaming have been greatly exaggerated. E3 2002 demonstrated without a doubt that keyboard-and-mouse gaming is still the place to be for older and more cerebral gamers. The online revolution that console makers tout as the next big thing is an everyday reality for PC users, and you couldn't throw a rock at the show floor without hitting an amazing network title. Whether it was *The Sims Online*, *Verant's* long-delayed massively multiplayer first-person shooter *PlanetSide*, *EverQuest 2*, or *Bioware's* *Neverwinter Nights*, Internet addicts will have their hands full this holiday season.

Many beloved PC franchises made a return at the show. *Warcraft III* and *Worlds of Warcraft* got a warm reception on the floor, as did *Wii Wright's* stunning *Sim City 4*, which was prominently featured in the crowded EA booth. Infogrames gave its clan boys more FPS action to chew on, with *Unreal II* and *Unreal Tournament 2003*, while Westwood attempted to cash in on America's newfound patriotism with *Command & Conquer: Generals*.

Also, for the second year running, a PC title was by far and away the most talked about game of the show. Last year it was *Medal of Honor: Allied Assault*. This year it was Activision's screening of John Carnack's *Doom III* that had the crowds buzzing. Simply put, you've never seen a game look this good before. All in all, there was a lot to chew on for PC enthusiasts, who may be looking at one of the greatest holiday gaming seasons in recent memory.



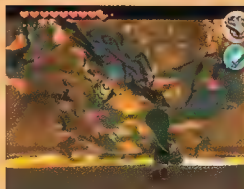
E3 REPORT CARD

A-

PC gaming has been pronounced dead more times than Keith Richards, but like that gnarled English rocker, it just keeps on beating the odds. If this year was any indication, the future for the market is strong indeed, although the success of Xbox and PlayStation 2's online plans could potentially begin to eat into its audience. Even so, PC will remain the console of choice for serious first-person fans, and it could take years for console online RPGs to reach the level of technical mastery and depth of their big brothers. While we don't expect a massive growth in the PC marketplace, publishers and developers are doing everything they can to ensure that their core audience is satisfied.

1 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA - GC

Once negatively dubbed "Celda," Shigeru Miyamoto's latest creation has left little doubt that the master deftly knows what he's doing. Defying the normally flat characteristics of the animation style, Link's facial expressions, effects like heat shimmer, vivid battles that leap off the screen, and more give Zelda a richness and depth previously unseen in the medium. The familiar Ocarina of Time gameplay is complimented by a new story and stealth moves. The sum of these parts creates an adventure worthy of Link - no matter how young he looks. This is what you bought the GameCube for, and you won't be disappointed.



2 TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 4 - PS2, XBOX, GC

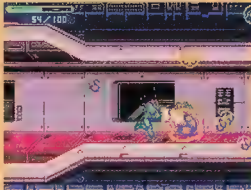
When avoiding the cops, it's good to never dwell at a skate spot too long. Just when fans were getting comfortable with the whole objective-based play of Tony 3, the series keeps on moving in better directions.



This time the game gives you more freedom in completing the levels (and in shaping them to your liking, as well) that have been greatly expanded in size. The lack of a traditional time meter makes this newest Tony combo-fest feel more like real skating as you pick objectives and interact with other characters. With rock stars reserving a Tony 4 kiosk all for themselves at one Sony party, we couldn't get enough of the best game ever to feature monkey poop.

4 METROID FUSION - GBA

We expected there to be a kick-ass Metroid game at E3 - but not from the Game Boy Advance. Unlike some other Samus titles [cough, cough], Fusion delivers on the warm, classic gameplay feeling that we've come to cherish from the series. Despite baring a resemblance to SNES' Super Metroid (and yet exceeding said title), Samus does have some surprises up her gun-cannon sleeve. She must absorb energy from fallen enemies in order to power herself up (this lets you gain the Morph Ball technique), lest it reforms as another foe. New climbing techniques have also been added to the list. First-person is for fakes! Accept no Samus substitutions!



5 THE GETAWAY - PS2

It could have all been very different for The Getaway. It debuted with promise almost two years ago, but none could have predicted Grand Theft Auto III. Even at this year's E3, Sony banked on



it by giving the title marquee status in its pre-show presentation as well as in its booth. Now, the buzz is back. The Getaway has taken its exquisitely modeled London streets, added perfectly rendered characters, and incorporated them into an East End world of revenge, high-speed chases, and gangster recoil. Lock, Stock and Two Playable Characters. Brilliant!

7 SHINOBI - PS2

Ninja Gaiden and Tenchu have followed different ninja routes, and it's too bad for them that they aren't more like Sega's Shinobi. With non-stop action reminiscent of console-mate Devil May Cry (helped by some dynamic, real-time scarf rendering!), Shinobi was a flurry of steel that cleaved enemies in two. Perhaps the best thing, though, was hero Hotsuma's ability to do speed dashes, throw shuriken, and run along walls. There were boundary-breakers at this year's E3, but Shinobi proved that its furious slashing of enemies is as classic as the art of the Japanese assassin itself.



8 RED FACTION 2 - PS2

Developer Volition's celebrated Geo-Moa engine is back and it's better than ever. How about foes using the destructible environments to their own advantage by blowing down walls like a pissed-off Kool-Aid man with a rifle? Welcome to the new world of the Geo-Mod, where enemies are smarter, firefights more explosive, and no part of the environment is safe. The bar has been raised since the first Red Faction, but Red Faction 2 should elbow out some room for itself no problem.



3 TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL PS2, XBOX, PC

All eyes this E3 were riveted on the exploits of one man and his uncanny knack for stealth - and we're not talking about another Metal Gear Solid 2 game. Ubi Soft has yet to turn its Tom Clancy license



into anything of Snake's proportions on a console, but Splinter Cell may be the first. While Konami's franchise perfected stealth techniques, Splinter Cell truly makes it come alive in an array of brilliant shadow mechanics, weapon modifications, and realism that only Tom Clancy would be modify enough to insist upon. The reaction on the show floor was: "Ubi Soft? Really?" But there's no suspending belief here: This game is going to be huge.

6 RATCHET & CLANK - PS2

Forget about Ratchet being a cute animal with big ears. Or the buddy system between him and the Futurama-esque Clank. Over 35 weapons and gadgets, baby. Happy, happy, kiljoy! Insomniac was clear in



pointing out this feature of the game, and neither that, nor the title's natural platforming features, were lost on show goers, either. With competition this year from the likes of Blinx and Vexx, Ratchet & Clank still comes out on top in impressing us to no end. Who knows, maybe it's because it doesn't have an "x" in its name?

9 SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE - GC

Sorry, Luigi, but finally we get our hands on the real plumber title for the GameCube. While Luigi's Mansion may have relied on star power, Sunshine shows plenty

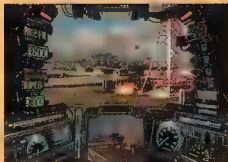


of game in its own right. Mario's water pack is ubiquitous in its uses, allowing you several ways to purge the island of the spreading mess of evil. Levels also expand vertically via a series of high wires that produce no end to the wonder. Nintendo's heavy hitters are finally beginning to surface for the GameCube and the wait, while worthwhile, is becoming all the more excruciating.

10

STEEL BATTALION on PS2

When we first mentioned Steel Battalion last E3 (then it was known as BRAIN BOX), we thought Capcom's Shinji Mikami's constant wearing of sunglasses was damaging his judgment. How can you sell a game peripheral that costs well over \$100? A year later and we couldn't be more pleased that the company's stuck to its guns. From flipping rows of switches to power up your mech to the "big red button," there's no denying Steel Battalion's fun on and off the screen. We suggest you pick this up when it releases, before you merely hear about it in some future installment of Classic GI.



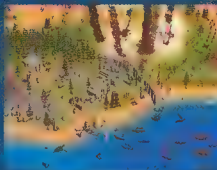
PC Top 5

This year's E3 saw the PC gaming sector flex its collective muscle with the debut of many highly anticipated titles. As people on the floor looked for that one blockbuster game, a PC title (Doom III) quickly became the talk of the show. With a bevy of other incredible titles running closely behind, E3 2002 was a PC powerhouse. Had we not decided to give the system its own list, many of the below titles would have undoubtedly made our overall Best of Show:



Doom III

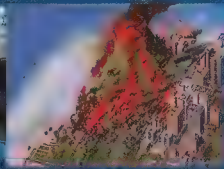
- 1 *Doom III*
- 2 *Age of Mythology*
- 3 *Star Wars Galaxies*
- 4 *Deus Ex 2: Invisible War*
- 5 *Sim City 4*



Age of Mythology



Star Wars Galaxies

Deus Ex 2:
Invisible War

Sim City 4

FEATURE

E3 afterhours

Actually, we lied when we said this E3 was all about games. Free food, complementary drinks, fancy parties, and really bad dancing is a big part of it, too. All of these were in abundance at the spate of parties thrown during the course of E3 week in Los Angeles. We don't relish the task of attending these soirees, but if getting tipsy at hotels that we'd usually be kicked out of is part of the job, then we'll grudgingly accept the duty.

Tuesday night kicked things off with a bang at the new downtown LA Standard Hotel, at Sony's celebrity-laden pre-E3 event. Hollywood's best and brightest were out in force, including Tobey Maguire, Courtney Cox and David Arquette, Hugh Hefner, Fred Durst, David "The Smallest Non-Midget Adult Male On Earth" Spade, and Drew Barrymore. The exclusive crowd was rocked to a brilliant semi-acoustic set by Jane's Addiction, and then found themselves bored to death by a drunk and disinterested set by Ja Rule, who has just overtaken Snap's ("I Got The Power") Turbo B. as the worst rapper of all time. Still, this party set a standard (no pun intended) that was hard to live up to for the rest of the week's festivities.

Wednesday night, there was almost too many parties to take in, with Universal hosting a Crystal Method rave, Eidos throwing a high-class bash at the Mondrian Hotel on the Sunset Strip, Activision's punk throwdown, and Microsoft's gala at the Park Plaza. Two nights in, and most showgoers were already too pooped to pop.

But pop they did at the big Sony fiesta on Thursday night. With attendance in the thousands, it was once again the biggest and haddest event of the week. Atlanta's Outkast let their freak flag fly, turning in a scorching set as the evening's main entertainment. They were so good, Kaz Hirai was even spotted on the side of the stage, getting jiggy with some colleagues and a scantily clad dancer. Rumors of a midnight appearance by Ozzy and Tenacious D proved false, but Latin rappers Ozomatli ably closed down the party.

After three days of debauchery and hard-nosed reporting, we were pretty tuckered, but we did manage to drag ourselves to the Sunset Strip Standard, for Sony's end-of-show cocktail party. The crowd included many Sony employees, and some of the top journalists in the game industry. Luckily, we managed to sneak our way in, and it was a calm end to a crazy week.

PlayStation 2

PlayStation 2



ON SET: THE MAKING OF

THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD

THE MOVIE

Lost in the creepy compact woods of Vancouver, shrouded in an impenetrable wet mist of quiet solitude, resides film's physical incarnation of *The House of the Dead* – a newly constructed set conveying a dilapidated sense of creepiness. Although entering the eerie house only to see its skeletal, prop-like construction abates any fear, its outside certainly looks convincing, as we're sure you'll agree when the movie debuts next spring.

Led by Director Uwe Boll, and Executive Producers Mark Altman and Dan Bates, *The House of the Dead – The Movie* will remain faithful to its horror roots and attempt to convey as much fear through elaborate sets, horrific zombies, and gore as an R rating will permit. Boll stresses, "We're doing a movie for all of the video game and horror fans. So if you don't show anything like exploding heads, an arm cut off, or something like that, then you make a piece of @#\$%." Take that, Paul W. (us) S. (y) Anderson and your *Resident Evil*.

Boll, Bates, and Altman clearly understand the importance of horror in a zombie flick. However, the story and characters seem a little mainstream, although with principals like Liberty (who's in a wonderfully revealing get-up), a mass market approach has its ups too! Basically, a bunch of good-looking college students travel to a deserted island to partake in a gigantic rave. The event takes a sudden turn for the bloody when Castillo (the undead antagonist) resurrects his army of zombies to devour the ripe youths. Seeking escape and safety, a group of surviving students are forced to take refuge in *The House of the Dead*, where most of the action will ensue. Fortunately, Boll emphatically indicates that the storytelling component only comprises 20 percent of the movie, while he'll devote the rest to gruesome action sequences. Since we met the actors, and discovered that only two characters survive, Boll's statement seems to hold blood.



The creator of the HOD games, Rikuya Nakagawa

Unfortunately, like the story, the zombies bear little resemblance to the game. Our encounters with various undead types revealed that only remnants like green blood and axe-wielding zombies will remain. Although we agree with the producers' decision to remove certain monsters that didn't easily fit into the zombie universe, such as the dragons and chainsaw wielding maniac, we still would have appreciated seeing some more familiar enemies from the games.

Nevertheless, the undead costumes look quite impressive, varied, and horrific. Altman and Bates devised five levels of creatures, four of which indicate the level of decomposition, with the fifth one designating special zombies like the moss and swamp fiends. These differences also dictate the manner in which the zombies function. Level four zombies (ones badly decomposed) act according to George Romero's (*Night of the Living Dead*, *Dawn of the Dead*) traditional undead, while level one zombies

(fresh meat) have the ability to run and jump!

To truly bring these monstrosities to life, and intensify the action and horror elements, the producers will spend considerable money on special effects and elaborate camera trickery. In particular, the Splatter

Man does this look like a scene from one of *The House of the Dead* games. We wonder if knocking one of these gravestones or barrels over would reveal an extra life or health pack?



Engine – a title that saturates the mind with a myriad of gross possibilities – will use CG effects to heighten the gore factor roughly 80 percent by enhancing



Fangoria Magazine editor Anthony Timpona actually had the chance to appear in the movie as a zombie

exploding heads, devoured bodies, torn torsos and gruesome dismemberments. Also, two types of camera shots caught our attention. The first one we noticed consisted of an elaborate trail of cameras which create a *Matrix*-like shifting perspective. In this scene, a zombie leaps through the air at a protagonist, stopping and spinning as he goes in for the bite. The second technique, thank goodness, is a bit more original. Featuring a camera mounted on a circular platform spinning at about 55 mph, one character fends off a zombie on the platform, while action in the background ensues. Although we didn't see this effect on film, we can only imagine how cool it will turn out.

With gore and action taking precedence over the story (which was never the games' strong point) and suitable set designs and effects, *The House of the Dead – The Movie* certainly shows more promise than the disappointing *Resident Evil* feature that recently staggered through theaters. For further details, check out the official webpage at www.hod-themovie.com.



The make-up and props look quite scary and gory. Even in person they appear convincing



The dead roaming the graveyard in between shots is a cool, classic scene for zombie fans



Here it is folks – The official House of the Dead. We can't wait to see the action in this horrifically creepy looking haunted house. We'll have to wait until spring 2003.



Ona Grauer



Jonathan Cherry

THE CAST

Jonathan Cherry (*Final Destination 2*)
Ona Grauer
Tyron Leitso (*Dinotopia*)
Enuka Okuma (*Josie & The Pussycats*)
Will Sanderson (*Wolf Lake*)
Sonya Solommona
Ellie Cornell (*Halloween IV and V*)
Clint Howard (*Austin Powers*)
Jürgen Prochnow (*Dune*)



We sure hope these guys get paid for the long hours of make-up application

RANDOM BEHIND-THE-SCENE FACTS

1. Some zombies take around four hours to get into costume, with Castillo taking nearly eight!
2. Shooting will take only six weeks. Most movies require twice as long.
3. The budget is \$12 million.
4. The flesh zombies eat in the movie is made up of latex or chicken, food coloring, mouthwash, starch, and a few other ingredients.
5. Only two cast members (Will Sanderson and Jonathan Cherry) genuinely like video games.



Here is just a tiny portion of the cameras required for the *Matrix* shot.

Tom Clancy's SPLINTER CELL

THE LIVING CUTSCENE

"It's actually Belgian," says

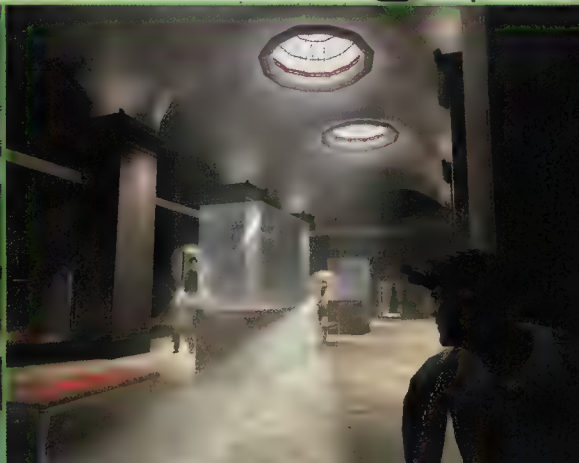
Xavier Foulleux, a Ubi Soft brand manager who is putting Splinter Cell through its paces in front of us. "The P-90 isn't German?" we ask. What a stupid question. If there's anyone who's going to know the origins of an obscure European sub machine-gun, it's those who answer to the god-father of pop-culture military literature, Tom Clancy. "We've got a weapon in this game which is actually a prototype from the same company. They've customized the P-90 into a modular design so you can swap in scopes, silencers, and..." the rest of the model number technical jargon goes right over our heads, but as Xavier takes the main character, NSA operative Sam Fisher, through a number of vividly lighted environments (toting the very gun being described to us) that showcase elaborate shadow and animated effects, it becomes quite clear that this is a game that will inspire awe in even the most jaded gamer on the planet. Not only have we gone limp in our chairs from what is inundating our senses on the screen a few feet in front of us, but we've begun to

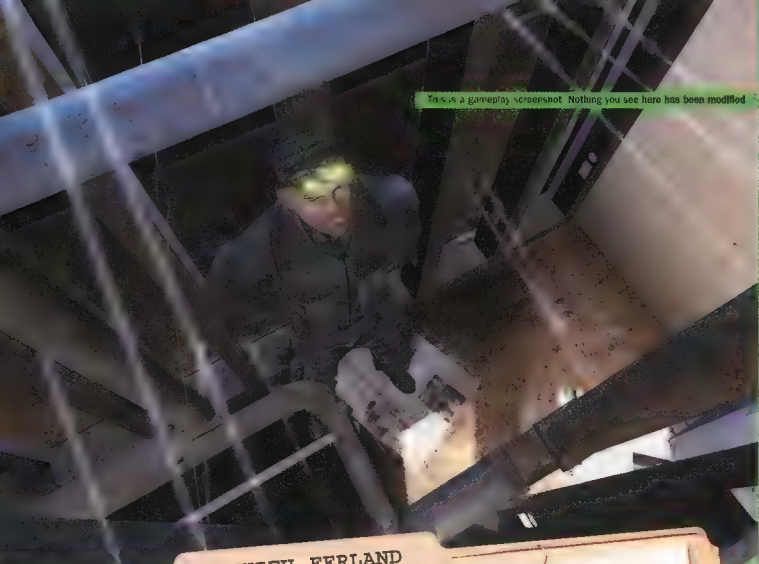
make up words like "metaculous" in the vain attempt to describe what we are seeing. In short, the game is a living, breathing cutscene. We thought the Xbox could offer up some nice graphics and effects before, but Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell is likely to be remembered in much the same way Super Mario Bros. 3 is: a title that fully taps the graphical potential of the system it was created for.

Splinter Cell began its quest for the store shelves approximately two years ago as the developers at Ubi Soft's Montreal offices tried to coax another amazing character out of the Clancy lineage. Thus, Sam Fisher was born, and with him, an incredible tale of stealth and intrigue. As a highly-classified operative in the National Security Agency, you are a splinter cell operating within the jurisdiction of a group dubbed the Third Echelon - which is itself a highly-trained and highly-classified unit under the NSA's command. Sam Fisher is America's



■ **PLATFORM** PLAYSTATION 2, XBOX, GAMECUBE, PC ■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT ENTERTAINMENT
 ■ **DEVELOPER** UBI SOFT MONTREAL STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE** XBOX/PC NOVEMBER, PLAYSTATION 2/GAMECUBE MARCH 2003





This is a gameplay screenshot. Nothing you see here has been modified.

first and only line of defense against large-scale terrorist attacks on the United States. This makes him different from the run-of-the-mill operative. Sam goes through life knowing if he is ever caught or killed during any of his missions, the government will disavow any knowledge of his existence. As a result of these harsh restrictions, Sam is set up as the ultimate bad-ass. Any and all of the newest gadgetry available in the world is at his fingertips, and it's put to good use.

Since it isn't wise to announce your presence to your opponents with clumsy movements and bodies flopping all over the ground when you send them to their maker, players will have access to a number of different stealth moves. Let's say you find yourself on top of a roof overlooking a small courtyard. You need to get down and move to a door on the far side, while avoiding detection of the guards wandering around below you. With seamless ease, and utilizing the game's near-perfect third-person camera system, Sam will use a zip line to the opposite

MATHIEU FERLAND

"The game has been conceived to be true to the Clancy atmosphere and realism. Everything is approved by Tom Clancy and his team - the storyline, the characters, the visuals, even the gameplay realism. It's a lot of effort, but it makes the game more believable and detailed."



Producer

The ambient light effects are a beautiful sight to behold



Climbing on things will not only look good, but it'll help you avoid detection in many areas



Whether it's rappelling down the side of a building, or who knows what, how you reach your target is up to you.

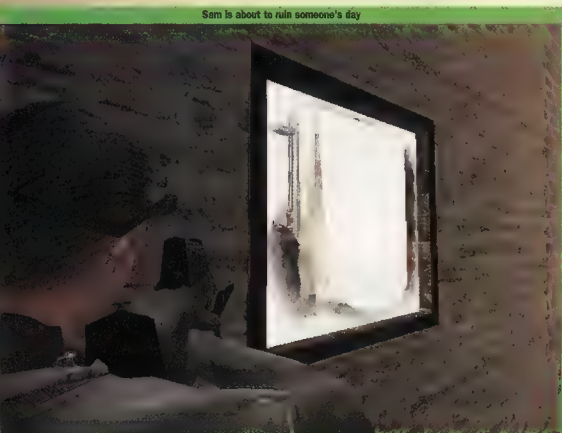




The animation even for the simple rail shown here is highly detailed

roof, find a drainpipe, and shimmy down to the ground – dropping silently in a dark corner. He will then carefully make his way to his quarry, dispatch him, and hide the body. This might not seem like anything terribly new, but when you see your character leap into the air, suspend himself in a hallway by performing the splits against the walls, execute a picture-perfect head shot, then nonchalantly drop back to the floor, you begin to realize there's much more game here than meets the eye.

The stealth abilities are definitely nice, and the gadgets are great, but Splinter Cell has graphics that soothe the soul. "We wanted to radically change the way lighting and shadows are computed in video games," says Mathieu Ferland, the title's producer. "The Xbox's abilities such as the depth shadow mapping, pixel shading, and vertex shading were very helpful for a game like Splinter Cell, where those lighting effects play a big part of the title's stealth gameplay. On Xbox, we've been able to create a



Sam is about to ruin someone's day

ANTOINE DODENS

"We've taken the Unreal engine and modified it to the point where it's basically brand new. The things we've been able to make with it are nothing short of mind-blowing."



Lead Programmer

The shadows on the right are being cast by characters on the other side of the screen



The bar on the right side of the screen is your stealth indicator. The more stealthy you are, the more the needle will slide to the left

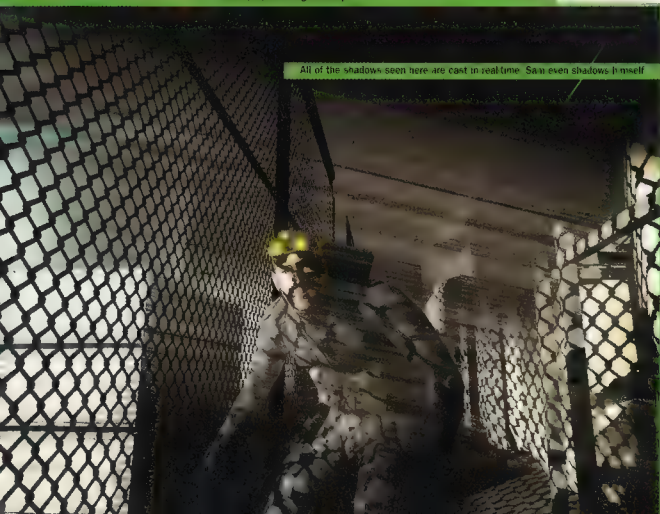




If you look closely, you can see the shadow of the impending victim of Sam's split move



Mr. Fisher prepares to get freaky



All of the shadows seen here are cast in real-time. Sam even shadows himself

new 'global' lighting system. The classical way of constructing light sources in video games relies on placing them in the levels, simulating reflections on textures, and then adding shadows to simulate realistic environments. We wanted this new system to be automatic and dynamic in all the levels. Now, we can have full interaction with the environment, and provide very nice gameplay elements with the shadows of enemies and with your own shadow." What all of this boils down to is graphics and gameplay worthy of high praise. With the help of a highly-modified Unreal engine, which was whipped into shape early in the project's life, Mr. Fisher and all of the other characters take on an eerie realism that has yet to be matched.

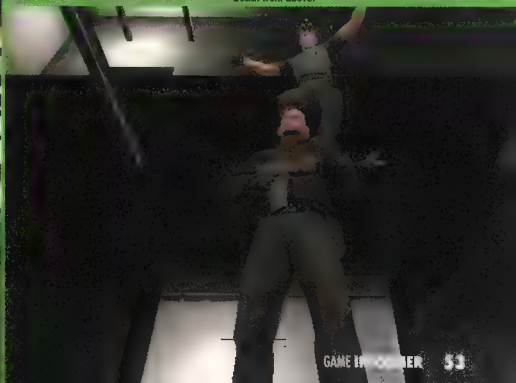
As with any stealth-action title out there (think Metal Gear Solid 2), the more you're able to interact with your environment, the more sucked into the gameplay you'll become. Since Splinter Cell carries the vaunted Clancy pedigree, every movement, weapon, character, and gameplay element is as realistic as possible. Because of this, you're able to manipulate virtually everything within your grasp. You want to pick up a fallen enemy's weapon? Go right ahead. You want to slide your fiber-optic camera under a door to see who's waiting on the other side? Be our guest. Maybe you want to electrocute a couple of guards who happen to be standing in a puddle of water...Everything about how you execute your missions in the 14 levels provided is up to you. Don't get into this game expecting to have your hand held the entire time. You need to exercise your brain more than your trigger finger if you expect to progress through the story.

Incredible realism, graphics, weapons, tools, and gameplay can only lead to one thing: a gargantuan hit. We're confident that fans of games like Metal Gear Solid 2 and Rogue Spear will find this title to be everything they've ever wanted in a stealth shooter, and probably much more. It will be interesting to see how the title finally shapes up once it's ready for release (PlayStation 2 and GameCube debuts will follow the Xbox's initial

offering in 2003), but if these incredible screenshots are an indication, Splinter Cell will likely be a benchmark release for the Xbox — a system currently in dire need of a smash hit.



Death from above!



PREVIEWS



GAMECUBE

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA NOT JUST ANOTHER CARTOON

Would you believe us if we told you that video game technologies have reached the point where a title with the graphical qualities of Dragon's Lair could be fully interactive and fully immersing? Probably not. To be quite frank, we never thought that this milestone could be achieved, either. Lo and behold, though, at this year's Electronic Entertainment Expo, the impossible happened, and in the least likely of places. Shigeru Miyamoto's prized Legend of Zelda series has done just this – achieving frighteningly realistic cartoon-like graphics while still holding true to the gameplay formula that we've come to know and love.

There are a ton of games on the market that have tapped into the wonders of cel-shading technology and have come close to pantomining the essence of a Saturday morning cartoon. While a feast for the eyes, none of them have popped off of the screen and truly made you believe that you were actually controlling a living, hand-drawn animation. The Legend of Zelda has achieved this effect perfectly. Fans of the series were disappointed with the artistic direction that Miyamoto and his team had taken, especially since the original plans for this game called for a darker and more mature theme. Once you see the game in action, however, you'll agree with this design decision. No detail has been spared, and like we said, you can't believe that you're actually taking part in the action that is unfolding across the screen.

Much like Super Mario Sunshine, The Legend of Zelda is a rebirth of sorts, but at the same time, a reflection of the 64-bit adventures. If you enjoyed the storytelling in Majora's Mask, you should be equally pleased with the tale that Nintendo has spun for this GameCube debut. Rather than regurgitating the same plot over and over again, it would appear that Miyamoto has finally decided to expand upon

the classic yarn. This new story digs deep into our hero's personal life and introduces players to Link's sister, Arin.

The gameplay mechanics are taken straight from the pages of Ocarina of Time. Everything from the lock-on targeting to item usage are delivered identically. Of course, a slew of additions have been implemented as well. Taking a page from Hideo Kojima's stealth formula, Link can now slink along walls, lean around corners, and duck under barrels. Furthermore, when an enemy holding a weapon is slain, Link can freely pick up the armament and use it for puzzles and combat purposes – even if it's a gigantic, six-foot sword that dwarfs Link's minute size.

From what we could tell, it doesn't appear as though Link will be accompanied by a fairy this time around; but rather, his sister gives him a magical stone that he can communicate with and gather advice from. Of course, minigames are in full swing as well. We were fortunate enough to witness a scene with Link bouncing across waves in a flashy boat. In this sequence, players must race against the clock to a finish line and collect as many rupees as they can along the way. The catch is that the course is laden with bombs. If an explosive is swaying in the water, you can pass over it without worry. However, if a bomb is elevated over the water, you'll need to drop your sails, then hoist them again to perform a miraculous jump maneuver. It sounds cheesy, and in many ways this action is far from believable, but the gameplay is intense.

The Legend of Zelda won Game Informer's Best of Show award for its debut at E3 and we can't wait to see what else Miyamoto has in store for us upon its 2003 release. It's still a long ways off, but we're just now seeing the fruits of Nintendo's labor and it's nothing short of spectacular.



Link can wield every weapon in the game – including those dropped by his adversaries.

All of the key ingredients from the 64-bit series are still a part of this GameCube sequel. Yes, you'll need to light torches to open doors.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/RPG ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** NINTENDO ■ **RELEASE** FIRST QUARTER 2003



As of now, the boat is used within one of the game's many minigames. You'll be able to control every little aspect of it and can even raise and lower the sails.



Here's a great look at the detail that went into the cel-shaded graphics technology. Notice how the lighting is realistically expressed on the character models.



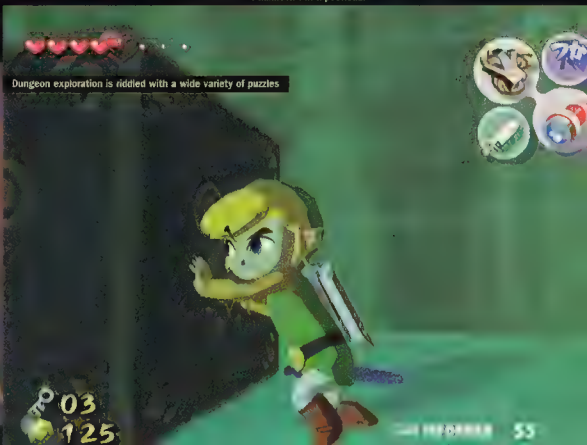
Conversing with locals can lead to alternate quests.



"I admit it, I'm a pot-head."



"Look into my eyes. You are getting sleepy."



Dungeon exploration is riddled with a wide variety of puzzles.



The rocket launcher has great versatility and can be used for job attacks



As always, the odds are never in your favor



All of the story material is presented through rich CG cutscenes

PLAYSTATION 2

CONTRA: SHATTERED SOLDIER

2D GAMEPLAY IS FAR FROM DEAD

Contra made its arcade debut in 1987. While widely accepted, the series didn't hit its stride until it was ported to the NES. Who can forget the classic title screen code, or the insanity of playing the game cooperatively with a friend? The series thrived through the 16-bit era of gaming, but took a nosedive when the PlayStation arrived. For some strange reason, Konami's US branch enlisted the talents (or lack thereof) of Appaloosa Interactive to continue the series. From one miserable game to the next, Appaloosa single-handedly buried the Contra name. Rather than experimenting with different gameplay styles or directions for the series, Konami is developing the sequel, *Shattered Soldier*, in house, and has one mission in mind – to stoke our nostalgic fires and bring Contra back into the limelight of gaming.

Shattered Soldier isn't 2D in the conventional sense, yet even though the graphics are entirely 3D, the gameplay is track based, just like the 8-bit precursor. Unlike the previous entries in the series, however, storytelling is a key feature within *Shattered Soldier*. In an interesting turn of events, the main character is Bill, one of the original Contra heroes. Rather than just bringing him back without explanation, the twist Konami has thrown in is that Bill has been framed for killing off most of the world's population and is sentenced to life imprisonment within a cryogenic freezing unit. When the aliens return for another harvest, Earth turns to Bill to save the day.

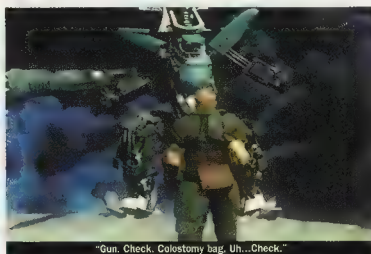


Each of the levels end in a mighty boss confrontation

Every little detail from the previous Contra games can be found in the gameplay. The somersault flips, ledge hanging, and ducking are flawlessly recreated. Instead of having vehicles drop different weapons, there are no power-ups in the game. Adding believability to the mix, Bill starts the game with all three of the weapons offered and can switch between them on the fly. The rocket launcher is diverse and powerful; allowing you to lob shots onto enemies below your position. The flame-thrower has the shortest range, but packs quite a wallop. Of course, the machine-gun is the everyday tool with the best balance, and should be the firearm you rely on the most. Another addition, which appears to be inspired by the Genesis classic, *Gunstar Heroes*, is the ability to lock your aim or position. This doesn't sound like a must-use Contra tactic, but being able to lock your gun in one of the eight fire positions and run freely makes life so much easier.

For the statistic freaks out there, *Shattered Soldier* tracks just about everything. From how many times you die and continue, to the number of baddies you clear out on a level, SS won't skip on the number-crunching. At the end of a stage, you'll receive a ranking for your performance. If you do well, you may unlock a secret or two.

As of now, Konami hopes to have *Shattered Soldier* on retail shelves this November. A new GBA game is also in the works.

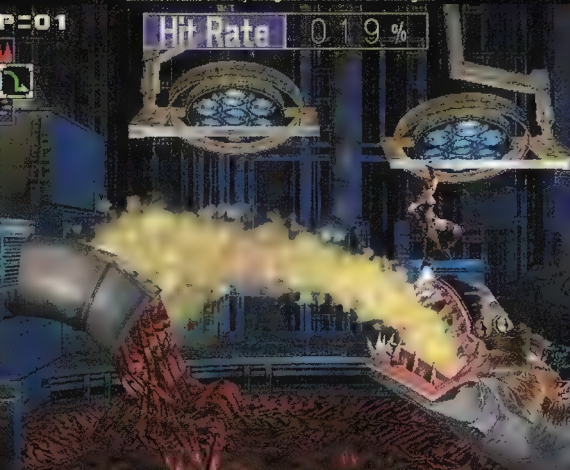


"Gun. Check. Colostomy bag. Uh...Check."

■ STYLE 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/SHOOTER ■ PUBLISHER KONAMI ■ DEVELOPER KONAMI ■ RELEASE NOVEMBER



Weapon drops are a thing of the past. Now, players can switch between three different firearms on the fly throughout the course of the entire game



The game tracks how many creatures you kill, how many times you continued and perished, and gives you a tally and rank at the end of the level



Most of the gameplay is delivered in the traditional side-scrolling vein



PREVIEWS

The new aiming gameplay mechanic allows players to lock their position or angle of fire



Bill makes his triumphant return through a brilliant story twist



The detail that went into the beasts will take your breath away



XBOX

STEEL BATTALION

HOW BIG IS YOUR JOYSTICK?

Take out another mortgage on your house. Sell all of your Pokémon cards. Donate as much blood as you can. Steel Battalion is stomping its way to retail shelves this winter, but it's going to take more than a piggybank full of coins to bring it home. If you haven't heard about this game yet, take a seat and brace yourself. Steel Battalion (Tekki in Japan) is the most complex mech simulator ever conceived. While the depth of gameplay and graphical realism set a new standard for the genre on consoles, the true delight of this game doesn't take place on screen. Capcom opted to break the bank and created a 40-button controller exclusively for Steel Battalion. That's right...40 buttons!!! Along with two analog sticks, three foot pedals, a tuning dial, five start-up switches, an eject button (complete with safety lid and flashing red lights), and an elaborate gear shift, every button has a unique function, and yes, they all come into play quite often.

When the game begins, you won't find yourself standing on a battlefield. You'll first need to prepare your vertical tank, which just happens to be tucked away in a hanger, for warfare. Before you can get started, you'll need to get your systems on-line. The first screen you'll see showcases a series of five meters. By flipping each of the five toggle switches, the meters rapidly fill with each action you make. At this point, it's time to look and load. Of course, you'll need to close the canopy at some point as well, which can be accomplished by hitting the cockpit hatch button. When your vertical tank is secure, the tactical heads-up display will appear. As numbers and colors dance across the screen, your next goal is to start up the engines. To do this, you'll need to watch the meters on screen and hit the flashing green ignition button precisely when they peak. If your timing is a little off, you'll choke the engine and will have to try again. Now that the elaborate ignition sequence is out of the way, you're ready for battle.

Controlling your mech is just as complex as the start-up sequence. You'll be asked to manage gear shifting, foot pedal braking, accelerating, and boosting. The left joystick controls your general movements, while the right analog is primarily for

aiming and firing weapons. You'll also have buttons designated for magazine changing, night vision, ventilation, main and sub weapon controls, and monitor views. Interestingly, one of the buttons is used specifically for extinguishing fires, and another to clean your windshield (mechs kick up a lot of dirt).

The gameplay itself spans across 12 different mission-based stages. Additional levels will become available upon game completion. You'll pilot 20 different vertical tanks which vary in performance and weapons such as plasma torches, an MK21-6 twin pod rocket launcher, and a 270mm rifle. While this game could easily fall under the classification of a gimmick, its onscreen antics are surprisingly deep and a blast to take part in.

Capcom hasn't revealed a price point just yet, but rumor has it that the game and controller will come packaged together for roughly \$200. That's quite an investment, and as of now, Steel Battalion is the only game compatible with the controller. Capcom did say, however, that it does have other ideas in the works (including an online/multiplayer Steel Battalion follow-up), and that it would talk with other developers interested in designing games for this peripheral.



The Steel Battalion controller (which comes packaged with the game) features 40 buttons, flashing lights, two joysticks, a tuning dial, and three foot pedals



In addition to the standard cockpit view, you'll also have the option of viewing the action from different perspectives



Every object in the environment can be destroyed. The explosions of buildings aren't physics based, yet no details were spared



The amount of information that is displayed onscreen at once is almost overwhelming.



If you gain too much momentum and try to turn, your vertical tank will topple over. When this happens, the HUD will scramble and your mech will sustain heavy damage.



If you don't hit the eject button before your mech explodes, your character will die and the game will be over.



XBOX

PANZER DRAGOON ORTA

MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER DRAGONS

Let's get one thing straight right off the bat. *Panzer Dragoon Orta* will not be a role-playing game. Before you start crying and hating your siblings, hear us out: As the continuation of a legendary shooter series that got its start on the Sega Saturn, this incarnation of the *Panzer* series will have players staring in awe at the visual popping up on the screen. That might be good enough for some people, but gamers demand more. Facing this challenge, Smilebit has embarked on a journey to keep this popular series fresh and entertaining for both newbies and seasoned veterans alike. To facilitate this goal, an engrossing storyline and fascinating characters have been artfully woven into the game's tapestry, and of course transformable dragons will make a return. There are three forms your mount can assume as you fight to save humanity. One has speed, another defense, and the last will highlight raw firepower. Choosing between these fighting styles will keep you on your toes, and will allow for some compelling tactical situations. The gameplay is still based on a track formula, but thankfully the mark-target lock-on system is just as impressive now as it was back in the day.

Graphically, *PDO* is right on par with the best the Xbox has been able to produce thus far. Particle effects will abound, and tantalizing environments are likely to be around every corner. Fans of the series are sure to enjoy themselves when the title eventually releases this fall.



There will be plenty of particle effects



Something just went Manano



Rain will make your missions more challenging

The scale of the game will be quite impressive

■ STYLE 1 PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER SEGA ■ DEVELOPER SMILEBIT ■ RELEASE FALL



The goal of the game is to locate and collect Shine tokens



Unlike previous Mario games, you'll spend a considerable amount of time conversing with the locals



"Mama mia! A warm spot!"



GAMECUBE

SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE

BREAKING THE 64-BIT MOLD

Rather than sticking with the token Mario plot where players must battle Bowser to save the Princess, Super Mario Sunshine actually delivers a new story arc that appears to take place shortly after the events in Mario 64. This adventure begins with Mario and Peach spending some quality time together vacationing on a tropical island. Before long, however, black and brown pollution begins tainting the landscape. The locals accuse Mario of vandalizing the island. It's up to you to clean up the land and clear Mario's name.

The methods of solving this riddle are a tad unorthodox, especially for a Mario game. Jumping, flipping, and stepping on enemy heads are still a part of the picture, but these actions play second fiddle to the newest play mechanic. In a slightly absurd turn of events, Mario now has a water pump strapped to his back. This handy little gizmo washes away the infesting goo that is spreading across the landscape. With one click of the R Button, a stream of water rockets out of the cannon. The C-Stick is used to change the length of the stream. In many ways, Mario has become a firefighter, but in a strange, twisted sort of way. Of course, the gunk is everywhere. It slides down hills, sticks to the bottom of your feet, and even infests living creatures. If it slithers onto you, you'll need to jump into the water to rinse yourself before it's too late.

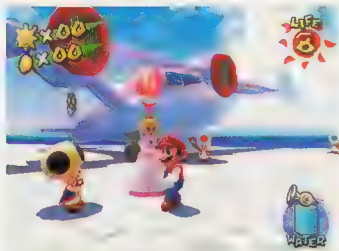
In addition to ridding the land of these piles of muck, you'll also use the water cannon in a number of unconventional ways. As if the spraying aspect wasn't obscure enough, the water cannon can also transform into a jetpack-like gizmo that will send Mario hurtling into the air for a few seconds. You'll also find it quite useful against the familiar assortment of Mario adversaries. For instance, you'll encounter an overgrown Piranha Plant that seems to have no weakness. That is, until you spray water into its mouth. After hosing it down for a few seconds, the Plant's stomach will expand to five times its normal size. At this point, the Plant loses balance and topples over. Although bloated, the foe is still far from defeated. With its swollen belly raised, you'll need to act quickly and soar into the air, concluding your assault with a butt-slam to the Plant's gut. In a beautiful show of effects and

particles, the force of your attack sends all of the water hurtling out of the Plant's mouth, thus ending the battle.

All of the recognizable acrobatic moves from Super Mario 64 are in the game and are joined by a number of new maneuvers as well.

Furthermore, if you were disappointed that you couldn't ride Yoshi in the previous installment, you'll be happy to hear that your dino compatriot is mountable just as he was in Super Mario World. All of these maneuvers will come into play as you quest for the elusive Shine tokens. The Shines are essentially the Stars from Super Mario 64. When you collect them in specific areas, the pollution subsides in that given sector of the world.

Super Mario Sunshine may not have the next-gen originality that you were hoping for, but we have a feeling that you'll fall in love with this follow-up. We walked away from it with our jaws literally on the floor.



For a brief moment in the game, Mario doesn't have his water cannon





XBOX

NINJA GAIDEN

AH! AH! AH! AH! NINJA GAIDEN ALIVE!

Hyabusa is much more imposing wearing the traditional mask

Ryu Hyabusa is perhaps the most well-known ninja in video game lore – despite the fact that he hasn't had a true starring role since the 8-bit NES days (Ninja Gaiden Trilogy on SNES and DOA appearances notwithstanding). Cutting through the attendees like a magnified beam of sunlight through an ant's torso, a new trailer of the game sprang out at us during Microsoft's pre-E3 press conference.

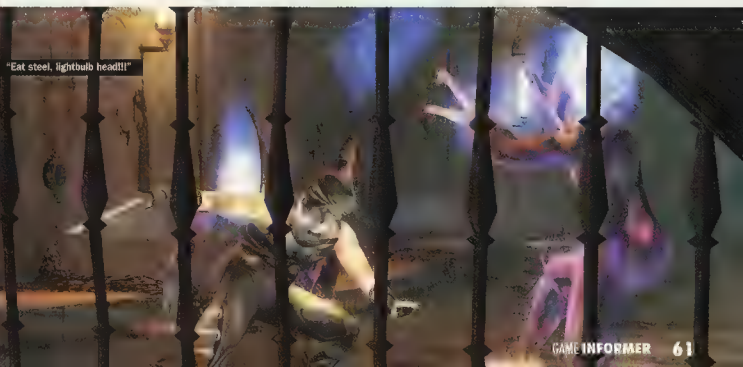
The game looks to play like a modified Dead or Alive, with a slew of enemies taking their shots at you simultaneously. These are some bad dudes, and their moves would make Jackie Chan use a stunt double. Aside from your standard ninja cronies, there are a few alien creatures with claws and glowing blue heads. You heard right. Their damn heads are glowing blue! Run away! Oh wait, you're Ryu freaking Hyabusa. You don't run; you beat that blue butt!

Ninja Gaiden's main man has more moves than Patrick

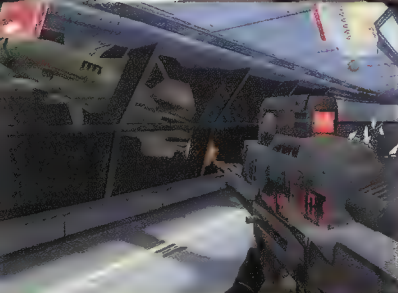
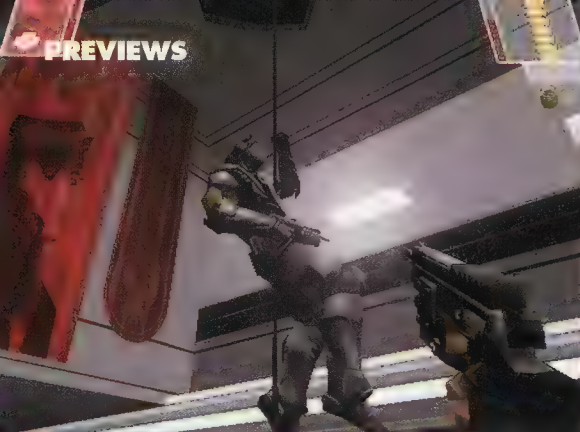
Swayze and Kevin Bacon put together. He'll flip like a burger on a griddle before lunging his katana in your throatana. He'll bounce off walls like a kid after a pack of Pixie sticks, and toss shurikens (throwing stars) faster than Brett Favre throws interceptions. Sometimes, Ryu resembles a firearm-less Dante from Devil May Cry, with plenty of air juggles. Other times, he's more like the one-on-one fighting game star he portrays in DOA 3, which is no coincidence, seeing as the game is being developed by Team Ninja led by Tomonobu Itagaki, who are also behind Dead or Alive.

The graphics we saw were expectedly dazzling. Pyrotechnics and particles accompanied all the finger-blistering action. It looks like a knock-down, drag-out battle for ninjitsu supremacy later on this year, with Shinobi and Tenchu sequels also on the horizon. As cool as they both look, this game has got to be the sentimental favorite. Go go Ninja Gaiden!

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER TECMO ■ DEVELOPER TEAM NINJA ■ RELEASE TBA



"Eat steel, lightbulb head!!!"



You'll definitely pack some heavy heat.



Don't cap your squad mates. Or sleep with their girlfriends.



Weather effects like rain make a lot more sense on Earth.

PLAYSTATION 2

RED FACTION 2

FPS GAMES ACT LIKE THEY FORGOT ABOUT RED

When the original Red Faction released, there was little to stand in its way as it shot to the top of the first-person shooter pecking order. As a year passed, the Bonds and Halos emerged, and promising FPSs like TimeSplitters 2 and Deus Ex 2 appeared on the horizon. All of a sudden, Red Faction became passé. Volition and THQ have a little something for all you haters out there. Y'all better ask somebody. It's Red Faction 2, droppin' plates on your face, yo.

The war on Mars is over. That whole battle was so five years ago. Red Faction 2 hits a little closer to home, taking place on Earth. The evil dictator Sopot has messed with the citizenry for far too long. A group of lethal soldiers has amassed, intent on taking him out. You play Alias, a demolitions expert, one of a six-man squad of troopers—each with their own specialty. They include a sniper, a stealth soldier, a heavy weaponry master, and a vehicle guru. This is very different from the one man army of the original game.

The Geo-Mod engine was indeed an impressive thing in Red Faction. It allowed you to destroy virtually any part of the landscape with a well-placed shot. However, this sequel takes it to wild new lengths as it infinitely expands upon its uses. For example, chunks of column blast off during a

firefight, similar to the office building scene in *The Matrix*. Basically, everything you see—walls, shelves, office supplies—can be blown to a fine powder. Enemies will also use Geo-Mod to their advantage, blowing up walls to get easier access to your soon-to-be dead booty.

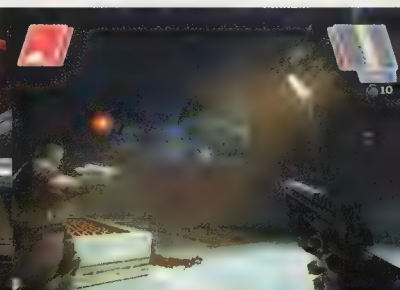
That's far from the only cool trick the AI will use to combat your squad, however. They will take cover when you're taking aim, team up to surround you, and even rappel down through skylights. That's just fine, because they're not the only ones with enhancements. Your character now can wield two different guns at the same time. If that's not cool enough, he can fire them independently, using the shoulder buttons. When only one of the 15 firearms is being gripped, his free hand can toss deadly grenades. Auto aiming isn't quite so obvious this time around, but will subtly help you take out your adversaries.

Perhaps the optimization that will inspire the most cheers for Red Faction 2 is the loading. Instead of waiting dozens of seconds to load new sections of level, the times weigh in closer to three or four. Red Faction was recently promoted to Greatest Hits status, keeping it in the minds of PS2 gamers. We have a feeling the sequel will follow in its footsteps. Choke on that, haters.

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** THQ ■ **DEVELOPER** VOLITION ■ **RELEASE** WINTER



"Hmmm... Who do I shoot first?"



Environments take place both in and outdoors



PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/PC

METAL GEAR SOLID 2 SUBSTANCE

WILL THE REAL SOLID SNAKE PLEASE STAND UP?

Metal Gear Solid 2 captivated us all – so much so that we awarded it the title of Best Game of 2001. The reasons were simple: captivating gameplay, engaging storyline, and a psychological thriller that dished out surrealism when we least expected it. Konami is flexing its developmental muscle on a new twist to the Sons of Liberty tale.

Solid Snake grabs the spotlight back from that wishy-washy rookie, Raiden, on this title which will release first on Xbox. You'll do many of the things you did as Raiden, but this time as bad-boy mullet-man Snake (or, as he's referred to through much of the game, Pliskin). This includes battling freakish bosses, like the near-immortal Vamp; and doing such tasks as leading Otacon's sister Emma to safety. In addition, you can choose to play as Raiden from the start.

Substance is far from merely the same game with Snake at the helm. Literally hundreds of VR missions will both test your training, and school you like never before. This has us a bit worried, remembering the debacle that was PS-X's Metal Gear Solid VR Missions, but the things that we've seen quell any fears. You'll see Godzilla-sized enemy troops, hack away as

Ninja, and watch bad guys inexplicably vanish into thin air. Odd events will challenge your perception, reminding you that it is indeed a game you're playing, but still keeping you totally entranced. They will dish out the jaw-dropping moments that you remember from other Metal Gear games – Sons of Liberty's faux Game Over screen and naked, vulnerable scene; and Metal Gear Solid's psychic Psycho Mantis battle.

As you can tell from the pictures, Snake takes some time to grab his board and do a little skating. While we're not sure this is the best thing for the super-agent to be doing in times of cataclysm, it appears Konami has put a lot of time and effort into this bonus mode. We're hoping it will be better than the company's abysmal X Games Skateboarding title.

It would be easy to pawn Substance off as just a quick cash-in on a popular title, and we'll have to play it to confirm or deny that, but we're still extremely excited about this release. We can't wait to see what will happen to Snake and crew next, and Xbox gamers have been waiting for the Metal Gear bone ever since the system launched. Get those teeth sharpened, because it's coming your way.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI ■ **DEVELOPER** KONAMI COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT JAPAN
■ **RELEASE** XBOX (NOVEMBER), PLAYSTATION 2/PC (TBA)

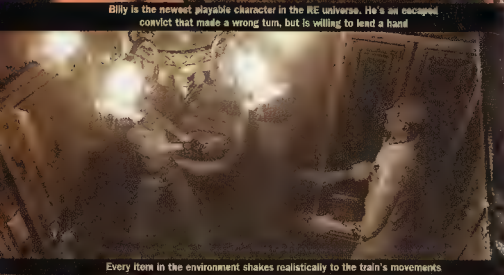




You'll often times find yourself overwhelmed by the number of zombies that occupy the screen



Billy is the newest playable character in the RE universe. He's an escaped convict that made a wrong turn, but is willing to lead a hand



Every item in the environment shakes realistically to the train's movements

GAMECUBE

RESIDENT EVIL 0

IN THE BEGINNING

If you're one of those nerdy types who nit-picks at every little detail, and suffers from severe migraines when trying to comprehend why the vehicles in the Star Wars prequels are more advanced than they are in the following movies, *Resident Evil 0* may give you a heart attack. It's a good thing that Capcom updated the original release, otherwise this game would seem way out of place. *Resident Evil 0* is a prequel to the original series that delves deep into Umbrella Corporation's history.

As hard as it may be to believe, the graphics in *Resident Evil 0* far exceed those within the GameCube *Resident Evil* remake. Since a good majority of the game takes place on a train, everything in the environments is animated. You'll see water spilling out of a dirty sink, a cup banging around in a cupboard, and light fixtures swaying to each bounce the train makes. You'll even witness lighting from nearby towns flashing through the windows. The crazy thing is, all of these elements are as authentic as possible. Every little shadow is reflected perfectly on the environment and those inhabiting it. The character models have also been tweaked subtly. For example, if you look closely at Billy, who just happens to be a new playable character, you can see that his hair sways and the handcuffs on his arm move accordingly to his actions. Billy doesn't have any affiliation with the S.T.A.R.S. team. He's actually a convict on the run who chose the wrong train as his getaway vehicle.

Resident Evil fans should be familiar with the other playable character, Rebecca. She lent a hand to Chris and Jill in the first game and proved to be a vital player for her medical training. This time around, however, her role is more aggressive, and you won't find her hiding in a medical closet mixing herbs. She's a rookie Raccoon Police Officer, and she knows how to wield firearms.

As always, the players will separate from one another throughout the course of the game. Rather than playing all the way through as one character, then switching at a specific point, you'll be able to control both of them...almost simultaneously. At any point during gameplay, and through a mechanic called Partner Zapping, you can freely switch between characters on the fly. If you choose to, both characters can occupy the same room, and yes, if a zombie appears, the character that is out of your control will attack through CPU AI. Since ammo is limited, you can switch control and disarm the secondary hero, back them into a corner, or even leave the room. If both characters are onscreen, the analog stick will control the primary protagonist and the C-stick the other. It's an evil version of PS2's *Cookie and Cream*!

This *Resident Evil* is said to be the most difficult. Yes, two characters are better than one; but take into account that if one dies, your game is over. You'll constantly need to switch it up to make sure that the duo is out of harm's way. Another great addition, one that we're sure you've struggled with for years, is the ability to drop items wherever you desire. If you see something you want, drop something else, and grab it. Since there are no item boxes, you'll need to remember where you placed your stash. It's different, but at the same time, much better than before. *Resident Evil 0* is a GameCube-exclusive release and should be available for play this fall.

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ PUBLISHER CAPCOM ■ DEVELOPER CAPCOM ■ RELEASE FALL



PLAYSTATION 2

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE TWO TOWERS

THE WAR FOR MIDDLE EARTH

The Fellowship of the Ring was easily the best movie of 2001 no matter what the Academy says. Sure, *A Beautiful Mind* had super-hottie Jennifer Connelly, but that's no reason to pick it over Peter Jackson's perfect recreation of J.R.R. Tolkien's epic fantasy series. Especially since *The Lord of the Rings* filled the babe requirement with Liv Tyler (yum!) and nowhere in *A Beautiful Mind* did we see Russell Crowe's main character John Nash fight orcs or cave trolls, which disqualifies any movie immediately, as far as we are concerned.

Electronic Arts obviously agrees with us, because this November that other movie won't be getting a game, and *The Lord of the Rings* will. Since this adventure is coming out at the same time as *The Two Towers*, it will focus primarily on the sequel. However, since developer Stormfront didn't want you to miss out on a chance to experience the best scenes from the first movie, about 40 percent of the game's 16 levels will recreate some of the highlights – including the Ring Wraith encounter on Weathertop and also the Mines of Moria.

Unfortunately, EA didn't have time to create a massive RPG like we all would have wanted in time for the sequel, but they have given us the next best thing – an action game where you get to kick Sauron minion butt with either Aragorn, Legolas, or Gimli – each featuring their own fighting styles.

Knowing how sophisticated Lord of the Rings fans can be, Stormfront shied away from the game being a pure button-masher and added in various attack combos, the ability to increase character attributes, killing blows, and many parry moves to make the battles tactical. For example, some of the Ur'kai wield shields that will stop any attack. To counter this, you must use a strong attack to destroy their shields before any of your combos will land. Of course, since you will be taking on hordes of enemies at once, wise use of the block/parry button is essential. Get surrounded by attacking enemies and it's an animation feast for the eyes as characters counter blows from all directions.

It's easy to brush off this rendition of the series for being a brawler, but fans of the movies will quickly see that it's much more than that. It's an experience. From the Forest of Fangorn to the Plains of the Rohan, the action is always heated and the experience is really brought to life by the beautiful scenery and fluid animation. We doubt any fan will be able to put the controller down once they find themselves fighting side by side with Gandalf, Frodo, and Boromir in the Mines of Moria, or slaughtering orcs with Gimli while defending Helm's Deep. We know it sent shivers down our spines.



While we continue to dream of running through the Mines of Moria with Gandalf, the only playable characters in the game are Legolas, Aragorn, and Gimli.

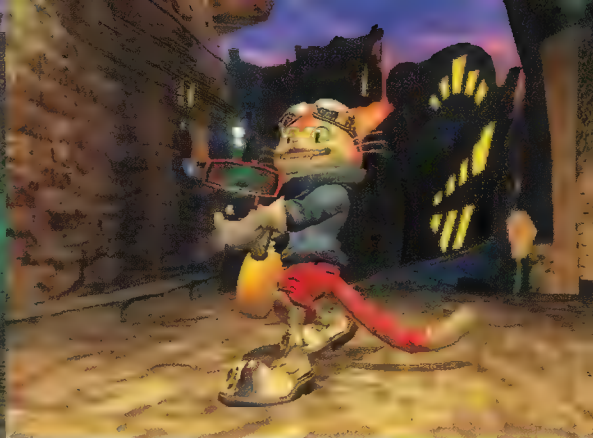


Although players will be able to acquire new attacks and weapons at level end, the bulk of gameplay consists of button-flailing hack n' slash.

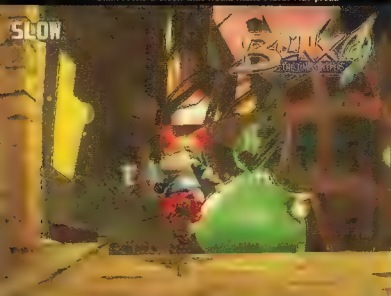


In addition to melee weapons, Aragorn (and Legolas) can use bows for long range attacks. You'll even have the ability to acquire Elven fire arrows.

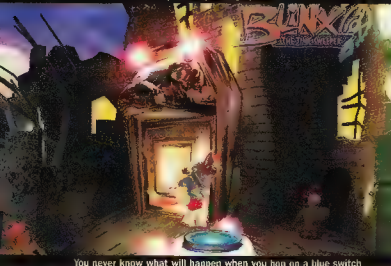
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** STORMFRONT STUDIOS
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER



Blinx rocks a clock that would make Flavor Flav proud



Each time-controlling move, like this slow motion, is accompanied by cool graphical effects



You never know what will happen when you hup on a blue switch

XBOX

BLINX: THE TIME SWEEPER

GOT THE TIME TICK-TICK-TICKIN' IN MY HEAD

Out of all video game genres, platforming is perhaps the most under-utilized on Xbox. Thus, we were pleased when Microsoft rolled out *Blinx: The Time Sweeper* at the company's pre-E3 press conference. It not only fills the genre's void on the rotund Microsoft system, it also looks to be one of the best action/platform games we've seen in a long time.

Blinx is a cat. He's not even that cool of a cat, but beggars can't be choosers. It's what Blinx does that's impressive. You see, he's a time sweeper, which is a fancy term for janitor. It's his task to keep time flowing normally by collecting errant time crystals. It's business as usual until a princess (don't people ever hire bodyguards for them?) gets captured by a dastardly syndicate who have their sights set on the time crystals, too!

Being a time sweeper has its advantages. Blinx's tool of choice, the TS1000, is a futuristic vacuum that sucks up time crystals, trash, and uses suction in other creative ways (get your minds out of the gutter—this is a kid's game!). Picking up random objects from the environment is both smart and profitable. Grab a flower pot, and switch from suck to blow to hurl it at your enemies and take them out. If you keep items until the level's end, Blinx will earn cash for

each one. This dinero can be used to upgrade your weaponry.

In one of the coolest concepts yet for a video game, the crafty kitty can control the flow of time. In a hurry? Hit fast-forward to rocket through the level. Having trouble with an enemy? Use one of your pauses to freeze him in his tracks, giving you a helpless target. Record your movements and play them back; acting like a clone of Blinx to double your efficiency. Break a statue, stand on the rubble, then rewind to build it back up, as you get carried to the top.

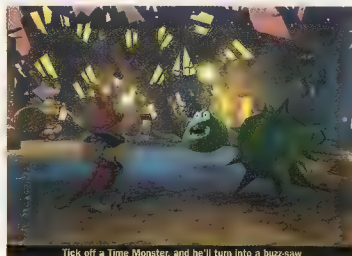
Even the collection of gems is nicely executed. Instead of carelessly picking up whatever jewel crosses your path, you are encouraged to collect them in patterns. If three out of the last four crystals you've grabbed are identical, you will be rewarded with a power-up. This adds a little strategy to your collecting.

Blinx may not be the most appealing character or have the most glamorous job, but that doesn't stop our anticipation for the game's release. The time-control gimmick is a great one, and we are confident that this will make a killer addition to the Xbox library. We can't wait. It's just a matter of time until we get our hands on Blinx.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** ARTOON ■ **RELEASE** FALL



We hope Blinx doesn't lick himself while onscreen



Tick off a Time Monster, and he'll turn into a buzz-saw



GAMECUBE

METROID PRIME

SERIOUS SAMUS

"Metroid, a first-person shooter?!" That's what we've been saying ever since Nintendo first let out a whisper about Metroid Prime. It's been a long while since Samus used her savvy suit to capture sinister aliens...and our hearts. However, this is Metroid for the new millennium. Whether that's a good thing or not remains to be seen.

At Nintendo's fanboy-filled press conference, Peter MacDougall, the company's Executive Vice President of Sales and Marketing, claimed that Metroid Prime was an early favorite for best of show honors. That statement made us all the more anxious to get our mitts on video gaming's most famous bounty hunter, but also put even more pressure on a game that's been in development since "Achy Breaky Heart" taught us all to laugh again.

With as open of a mind as possible, we stepped up to the plate. Seeing things from Samus' perspective is definitely different. She does have many of the same moves as Metroids of old, though. Jumping, door-shooting, ball-morphing (complete with bombs, of course), and a handful of different beams will all be utilized to survive Tallon IV, the planet you find yourself stranded on. There are even the high-tension scenes where you'll have a limited time to exit an area on the brink of destruction. The only time you're not behind Samus' visor is when you're rolled into your round, compact alter-ego. In ball form, the camera switches to third-person.

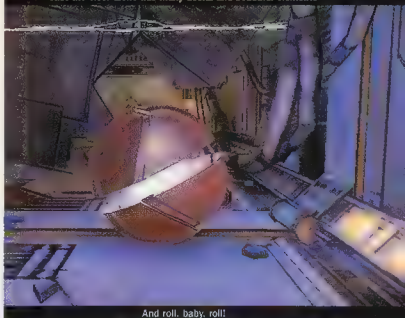
Speaking of the visor, it's equipped with a scanner, allowing you to get readouts on enemies, and spot hidden items and secret switches. Samus' heads-up display is a thorough one. Switching weapons is a breeze, and your energy level is displayed across the top, curving with the arc of the helmet. Perhaps the coolest part of the HUD is the map in the upper-right corner. It shows the lay of the land in helpful, 3D fashion, and will keep you from getting lost in this massive new world. You can still hit Start to check out the full-screen version, too.

Graphically, Prime is a tour de force. Retro Studios, as a second-party developer, is shuffling privy to many secrets of the GameCube hardware, and it shows. Transparencies are beautiful, the framerate is swift, and the lighting and reflections will most definitely dazzle anyone who feasts their eyes on this game.

Despite the similarities and additions, Prime just didn't feel like Metroid. Gone are the dashing charge jumps. Gone are the diagonal ice shots to above enemies, as you deftly jump from frozen foe to frozen foe. These are the things that made the other console Metroid titles great. It will take some getting used to for us to accept this game's new direction. If Prime were merely a new FPS called Shooter McGunsack, control issues would have us a bit concerned. But as this is a Metroid title, we're much more critical. Maybe that's why we came away from our first next-gen dance with Samus a little disappointed.



Just the visor alone has many useful and beautiful elements



And roll, baby, roll!

■ STYLE | PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER NINTENDO ■ DEVELOPER RETRO STUDIOS ■ RELEASE NOVEMBER 18



Level design like this definitely wouldn't be possible in a 2D game



We could be mistaken, but that big, blue gun looks a lot like the Ice Beam



Look closely at this picture, and you will never call Samus a "he" again



PLAYSTATION 2, XBOX, GAMECUBE, PC

JAMES BOND 007: NIGHTFIRE

COVALENT CAPERS

Electronic Arts is once again tapping their precious James Bond license to bring you some of the most exciting 00-action you've seen yet. Mr. Shaken-not-stirred will finally graduate from innuendo to in-yo-end-o with a certain sultry secretary. Yahoo! Okay, we're kidding, but now that we've brought your highest hopes crashing to the ground, we're going to build them right back up again. James will be battling to save the world from the nefarious criminal mastermind Rafael Drake. Of course, Bond wouldn't be Bond without crazy weaponry, high-tech Q-lab gadgets, and sexy ladies. Zoe Nightshade will be back for more giddy action as 007 roars through 10 exotic locations including high-altitude missions in the Austrian Alps, underwater sorties in the South Pacific, and he will even visit the zero-gravity environments of a space station (that's no moon).

Familiar aspects such as the split screen, four-player console combat will be back, but the PC will support maps where up to 32 Bond-fies can play simultaneously. Making a debut will be an upgraded camera system, an all-new original storyline, and even more upgradeable Q-lab gadgets that we all love to play with. Look for NightFire to make its release around the holidays on all systems.



Beautiful scenery, wouldn't you say?

■ **STYLE** 1- TO 4-PLAYER ACTION (CONSOLE) 1- TO 32-PLAYER ACTION (PC) ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** EUROCOM (CONSOLE), GEARBOX (PC) ■ **RELEASE** WINTER



PC

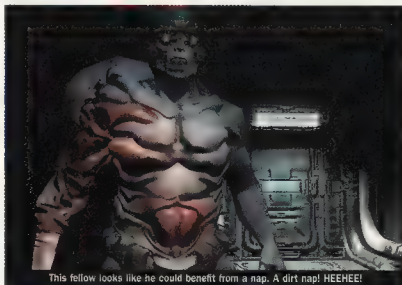
DOOM III

THE BUZZ MAKER

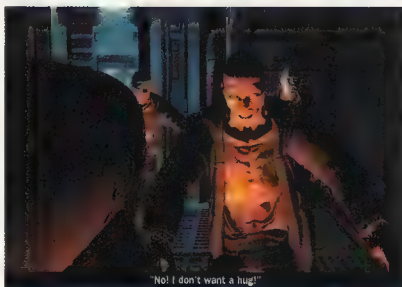
If there was one game that everyone was talking about at this year's E3, it was Doom III... and rightfully so. For the legions of fanatical id troopers out there, this title will definitely send you into a state of glossy-eyed orgasmal paralysis. We're not sure how to put this, but Doom III will most likely usher in a wave of the most incredible looking interactive software titles the world has ever seen. Featuring stunning visual effects and true-to-life animations, id's new baby is something we were incredibly impressed by.

As the space marine born anew, players will once again jump into the creepy world of techno-mutations and slimy aliens. A bevy of new weaponry awaits your skillful hands, but your nerves may not hold out against the onslaught of suspenseful situations and creepy settings. If a parallel had to be drawn between this and other titles, probably the best approximation we could give you is Resident Evil with a healthy injection of Serious Sam. The emphasis in the gameplay has been set squarely in the realm of a thriller, but the action has the fast and furious qualities only id can create.

The screenshots you see here are not doctored or captured from a cutscene -- we witnessed the game in action, and believe it or not, these shots don't do justice to what we saw. As to when we'll finally see Doom III on shelves, the familiar "when it's ready" response was given, but let's hope it's sooner rather than later.



This fellow looks like he could benefit from a nap. A dirt nap! HEEHEE!



"No! I don't want a hug!"



Look at the great texturing on the man-boobs

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** ID SOFTWARE ■ **RELEASE** 2003



PLAYSTATION 2, XBOX, GAMECUBE

BURNOUT 2: POINT OF IMPACT

GET OUT OF MY DREAMS, SMASH INTO MY CAR

We know racing games are renowned for their speed, but this is ridiculous! After reviewing Burnout on GameCube last issue, we've already seen and played the sequel. Don't confuse our amazement with complaining, though – Burnout 2 brings the series to a whole new level.

Once again, Criterion and Acclaim have joined forces. Burnout was a fun arcade racer, but the goal with this sequel is to add depth in the courses, car list, and every other aspect. It's been Americanized, to reflect more of a *Fast and The Furious* vibe, rather than the very European flavor of the original.

There are a total of 21 vehicles: seven normal rides, seven unlockable cars, and seven tuned-up customs. Variety is also enhanced in the courses, which number 16, each of which also has a mirrored version. These take place in such exotic locales as Aspen, a Miami-style coast, an airport, and a busy interstate. Like the original, AI traffic will force you to slam your brakes and swerve to avoid collisions.

Crashes were the focal point of the first Burnout, and they have received an overhaul to make them even more cringe-inducing. Hoods, fenders, and bumpers all have near-infinite impact points, which will bend steel differently, depending on how and where they're hit. Glass shatters more realistically this time around, too. End of race crash replays are gone, but those in-game have been made to look better.

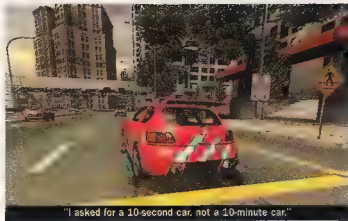
Thirsty for some new modes? Check out the cop car ram-fest called Pursuit mode, or earn your stripes in reckless abandonism in Burnout Driving School. With record keeping and a slew of cheats and secrets, Burnout 2 is a deep package, and is guaranteed to make your tires squeal with delight.



"This ride most definitely has the Nos. He better not be an amateur."



"I live my life a quarter-mile at a time. Nothing else matters."



"I asked for a 10-second car, not a 10-minute car."



"We hope Ja Rule was driving that thing."

■ STYLE 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING ■ PUBLISHER ACCLAIM ■ DEVELOPER CRITERION ■ RELEASE OCTOBER

PREVIEWS

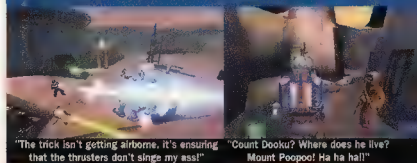


PLAYSTATION 2, GAMECUBE

STAR WARS: BOUNTY HUNTER

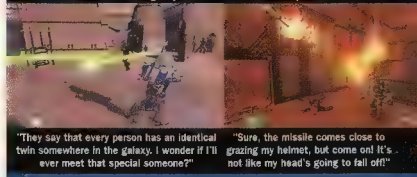
AND NO DISINTEGRATIONS!

The only thing that we really have to say is... please don't suck! Ever since we saw *The Empire Strikes Back*, we've wanted to assume the identity of *Boba Fett*, the most feared bounty hunter in the galaxy. Of course, since this game is inspired by *Attack of the Clones*, we'll have to settle for *Jango Fett*, who just happens to be *Boba Fett's*...well, you know. The game's story is actually a prequel to *Episode II* and sheds light as to why Count Dooku enlists the talents of Jango. Interesting. The action is fairly straightforward, and as of now, has an *Obi-Wan* feel to it – which isn't necessarily a good thing. We have faith that LucasArts would make the same gameplay mistakes twice...is...thrice is it? Well, whatever the number may be, it can't happen again. Jango certainly has a video game-savvy arsenal (flame-thrower, jetpack, rocket launcher, you name it). It's up to LucasArts to put it all together into an enjoyable gameplay package. As of now, however, the jury is out. Stay tuned.



"The trick isn't getting airborne. It's ensuring that the thrusters don't singe my ass!"

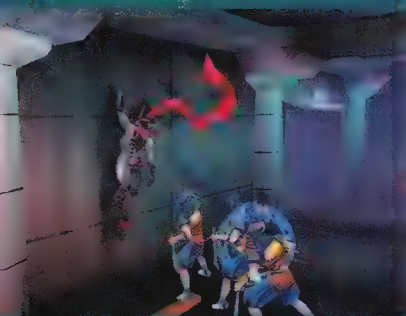
"Count Dooku? Where does he live? Mount Poopoo! Ha ha ha!"



"They say that every person has an identical twin somewhere in the galaxy. I wonder if I'll ever meet that special someone?"

"Sure, the missile comes close to grazing my helmet, but come on! It's not like my head's going to fall off!"

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER LUCASARTS
■ DEVELOPER LUCASARTS ■ RELEASE FALL



PLAYSTATION 2

SHINOBI

MOVE OVER, RIKIMARU! LOOK OUT, RYU!

Just thinking about this game makes us weak in the knees. For those of you who haven't had the pleasure of seeing Shinobi in action yet, the gameplay and visual presentation are very reminiscent of Capcom's Devil May Cry. If we didn't know better, we'd say that Capcom and Sega are sharing technologies. Of course, instead of stepping into the shoes of a demon slayer, you'll assume the identity of a crafty ninja with a massive, Spawn-like cowl that trails 20 feet in your wake.

Rather than following the popular trend which bases play mechanics around stealth, Shinobi's actions are feversh, visceral and in your face. Just to give you a taste of what to expect, if you unleash a flurry of attacks upon an enemy, they won't fall onto the ground and magically disappear when they are defeated. Apparently, your last blow cuts deep, and you'll soon see why. The deceased foe will stand motionless for a few seconds, and just when it would appear that nothing is going to happen, the adversary's torso slowly starts to move. If you look closely, you can see that you've actually sliced your antagonists in two. The severed torso is the torso collapses onto the ground in a bloody heap.

If this doesn't get your heart pumping, perhaps the idea of running on walls, disappearing in mist, and flipping over building tops will.



After defeating all of the enemies in a room, stand your ground and watch as their torsos slide off of their legs

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA
 ■ **DEVELOPER** SEGA ■ **RELEASE** FALL

70 GAME INFORMER



XBOX

TAO FENG:
FIST OF THE LOTUS

JUST THE TAO OF US

What's the best way to create a next generation fighter that everyone will want to get their hands on? Step one: Take John Tobias, co-creator of Mortal Kombat, and put him in a lead role with a new development firm (preferably named Studio Gigante). Step two: Filter into said firm a number of ex-Mortal Kombat team members. Step Three: Cover, bake for a year, then serve hot to the public. Tao Feng is the result of such a recipe, and the chops it has are nothing less than finger-licking good.

The engine Fist of the Lotus will utilize gives gamers an unprecedented amount of control over their environments. Nearly everything you can see on the screen can and will be broken, including the characters themselves. There is the potential for a situation where you could run up a wall and flip behind an enemy, then kick his leg in such a way that it breaks. Your opponent will then limp noticeably, and protect that side of his body for the remainder of the fight. Cuts, bruises, and scrapes will also show up on the character's face and frame. Believe us — there will be plenty of opportunity to sustain these injuries. Also incorporated will be a "Chi" meter which



Using the environments can help you defeat your foe

fills as you dole out damage to your adversary. Once this meter is full, players can either heal a disabled limb or perform one of many special attacks. Hopefully, this awesome sounding title will be ready near the beginning of next year.



You can see the damage modeling on this dude's chest

As in nature, this gentleman has developed what look like large eyes on his body so birds don't eat him

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** STUDIO GIGANTE ■ **RELEASE** 2003



PLAYSTATION 2

BREATH OF FIRE

SEARCHING FOR LIGHT

Details surrounding the latest entry in the Breath of Fire series are scarce at the moment, but Capcom was willing to divulge a few details. The story takes place deep underground and the goal of the game is to work your way to the surface. Unlike the other Breath of Fire titles, combat takes place in real-time and all of the spells and attacks in the game are based on an Ability Point System. The last tidbit of information that we were able to finagle is that the game evolves each time you play through something called SOL (Scenario Overlay System). When you beat the game and start again, not only will your experience and items carry over, but different events will be in place, and the shape of dungeons will change.



All of the combat actions are based on an Ability Point system, which will bring about larger combos and more devastating blows.

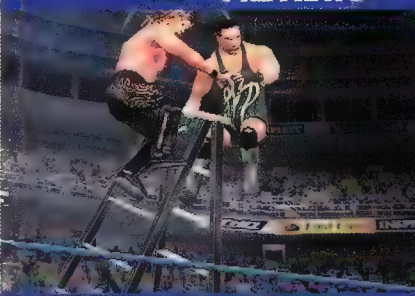


Set up traps, then lure enemies for an easy kill

The graphics are different, but at the same time, stunning

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ PUBLISHER CAPCOM ■ DEVELOPER CAPCOM ■ RELEASE WINTER

PREVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2

WWE SMACKDOWN: SHUT YOUR MOUTH

I'M JUST TALKIN' 'BOUT SMACK

No matter what the ratings do for the WWE THQ's wrestling games are big sellers. SmackDown has been a PlayStation tradition for years now, and Shut Your Mouth is the next-gen evolution we have been hoping for. The game is full of backstage shenanigans and promo madness like never before. Brand extension is illustrated through a World Wrestling draft. More impressive, though, is the way the game played at the Electronic Entertainment Expo. While

using the standard, rather simplistic control scheme of SmackDowns past, Shut Your Mouth flows smoother and captures the subtle nuances of each Superstar. RVD's kicks snap against skulls, Triple H shows intensity in every move, and Hogan... well, he stands there looking very, very old.



As the WWE's hottest female, let's hope Stacy doesn't get a big head like Sabre or Sunny



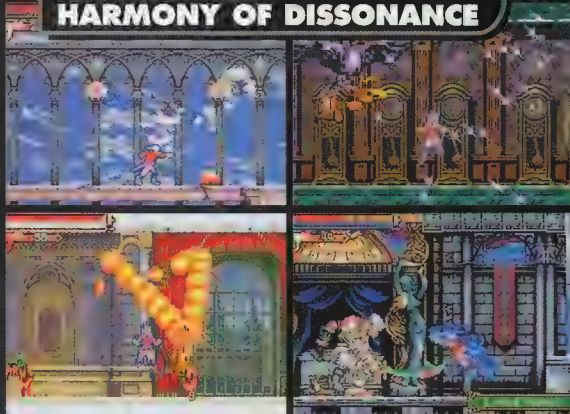
Stone Cold makes sure Stephanie McMahon's dad doesn't make any more she-devils

■ STYLE 1 TO 6-PLAYER FIGHTING
■ PUBLISHER THQ ■ DEVELOPER YUKE'S
■ RELEASE WINTER

PHOTOPHILE

GAME BOY ADVANCE

CASTLEVANIA: HARMONY OF DISSONANCE



Castlevania is definitely the king of 2D action – a title it earned a dozen years ago with Konami's first installment. Circle of the Moon launched with the GBA, and is still one of the handheld's best titles. Now, Juste Belmont carries on the vampire-slaying legacy, though we're a bit concerned over his tendency to freeze during a whipjump. Still, the item management, Spell Fusion combat system, and RPG elements assure that this will be yet another legendary release this September.

GAME BOY ADVANCE

METROID FUSION



Developed by the same team that created Samus' earlier adventures, we can safely assume that this is THE Metroid you've been waiting for all these years. If you're not twitching already, the gameplay harks back to the finesse and style of Super Metroid. There really is a God! In addition to a host of new gadgets, weapons, and actions, most of Samus' famous abilities are included as well. Metroid Fusion is slated to be available on November 18.

PLAYSTATION 2

SLY COOPER & THE THIEVIUS RACCOONUS



Sony's "other" first-party platform game, Sly Cooper stars a sneaky raccoon cat burglar on a quest to save his family. Armed with a multi-purpose, hooked tool and plenty of stealth tactics, Sly will hide in barrels, slink around corners, and slide down wires before surprising enemy guards. Cool lighting effects and cel-shading abound. Developer Sucker Punch plans to have the game ready for this holiday season.

PC EVERQUEST II



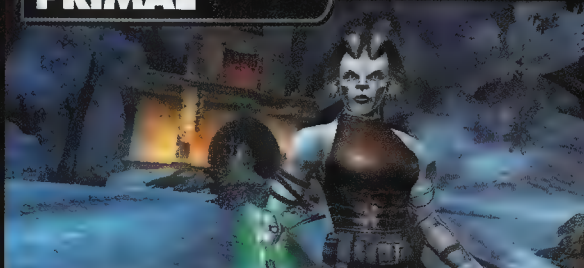
Game Informer has seen a lot of great MMORPGs, but from the looks of EQ II, we ain't see nuthin' yet. A brand new 3D engine which takes advantage of video card advancements gives the game per pixel shading, dynamic environment mapping, and a fully programmable surface shader system. So, on top of these incredible graphics, you have an epic role-playing game that's better than ever before. EQ II will be completely separate from EQ (no importing characters), but the familiar locations and feel of Norrath will be present. Look for Sony Online to launch this new version of virtual crack in late 2003.

PLAYSTATION 2 RED DEAD REVOLVER



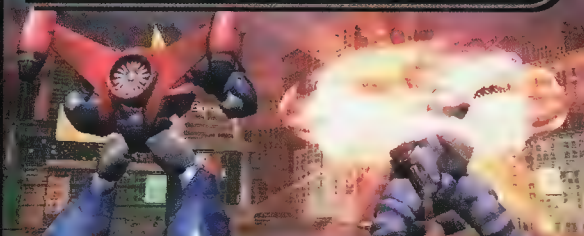
Capcom wants to know if you're going to have a fistful of dollars handy this winter. If you think you will, you might want to mosey on down to your local retailer and pick up a copy of their new western title, Red Dead Revolver. Red is a mysterious bad-ass who don't take no lip and shoots a lot of bad guys while blowing stuff up. Ride on horses, get into incredible gun battles, fight with three of your buddies in split-screen mode, or just saunter around the enormous environment.

PLAYSTATION 2 PRIMAL



Sony's next-gen action game dubbed Primal is sure to impress with its visual flare and innovative gameplay elements. Utilizing exploration, combat, and puzzles, players take on the roles of Jen and her gargoyle friend Scree – each of whom can be controlled at any time by the press of a button. Jen has the ability to transform into four different demonic forms, while Scree can scramble up walls and possess all kinds of statues. These concepts should prove for some interesting gameplay possibilities when Primal releases this holiday season.

PLAYSTATION 2 WAR OF THE MONSTERS



From the developers of Twisted Metal: Black comes a brawler for the people. Inspired by classic science fiction giant monster movies of the 1950s and '60s, War of the Monsters will do exactly what it sounds like it would do: pit huge monsters against one another on Earth. Sure, it doesn't sound all that exciting, but we couldn't take our hands off of our controllers when we played it at E3 this year. Crashing into buildings and punching mammoth beasts will be available for you to experience later this year.


PLAYSTATION 2 SILENT HILL 3



The horror...the horror...is coming yet again! Konami's wildly popular Silent Hill series is getting set to ooze onto the screen of PlayStation 2 owners next year. This installment will relate another frightening chapter in the SH legacy while utilizing stunning graphics, ear-splitting sound, and mature storylines. New puzzles, environments, and characters will abound, so you'll need to make good use of the updated weaponry as you take in all of these components. Look out behind you!

PLAYSTATION 2


DEVIL MAY CRY 2



If you felt that the first entry in the series was too difficult, or on the flip side, too easy, Devil May Cry 2's difficulty will adjust to how you play the game. A great deal of depth has also been added to the Devil Trigger, skill tree, and combat maneuvers. He can run on walls, people! As if this wasn't enough, you'll also have the ability to control a new female character! Best of all, Devil May Cry 2 will release just in time for the holidays.

PLAYSTATION 2

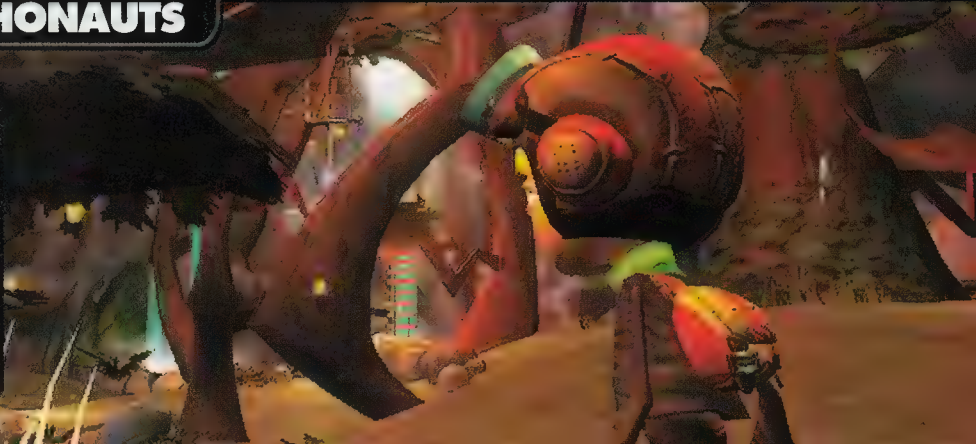
GUNGRAVE



In Sega's take on an edgy action title, players will fill the mysterious shoes of "Grave" — a hero who fights alone against a criminal organization. With such features as action sequences borrowing from Japanese animated films, Gungrave looks bizarre indeed. Grave will have a number of weapons to help him out through the six stages, and will even use a modified coffin to dole out punishment. Look for this one to come out sometime this fall.

XBOX


PSYCHONAUTS



You want to play with people's minds? Psychonauts is right up your alley. Raz, the game's hero, is a powerful young cadet at psychic summer camp. Raz soon realizes that some no-good bastard is kidnapping psychic children and stealing their brains. To foil this evil plot and earn the title of Psychonaut, Raz must solve puzzles and show off his platforming skills in other people's minds! You can imagine what could be waiting for him. Speaking of waiting, Microsoft will be releasing this title in 2003.

PLAYSTATION 2


DARK CLOUD 2



Joining the cel-shaded onslaught, Dark Cloud 2 boasts a number of innovations and gameplay enhancements. The Georama aspect has been overhauled significantly and should bring about greater depth as you construct your worlds. Creativity also reigns supreme through the Invention System, which gives players the power to develop, upgrade, and repair weapons and gadgets at any given moment. This 100-hour quest will make its debut in early 2003.

PLAYSTATION 2

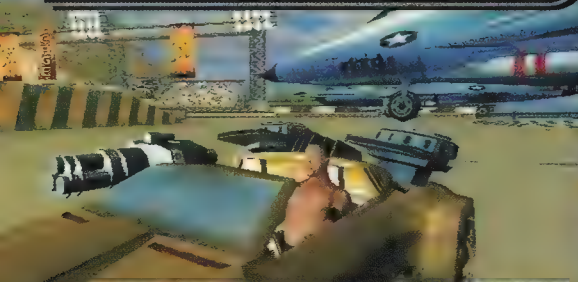
STAR OCEAN: TILL THE END OF TIME



Paul Handelman, president of Enix America, said of Star Ocean, "[This title] promises to be one of the most significant video games released in 2003." We're beginning to believe him. Continuing the saga started with the original Star Ocean, then expanded on by Star Ocean: The Second Journey, this incarnation will pick up the saga of Fate Linegod as he journeys to a protected planet under the control of the Galaxy Federation. Featuring a unique real-time combat system and incredibly detailed environments, this RPG will most likely make a big splash next year when it debuts.

PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE

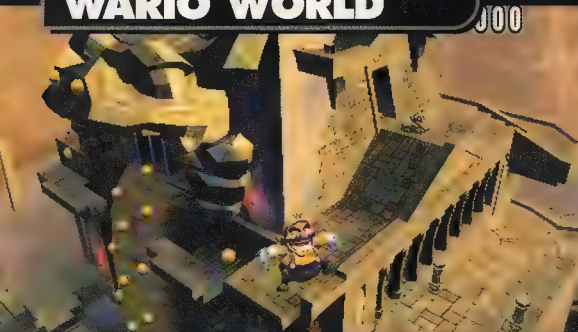
WORLD WRESTLING CRUSH HOUR



This is road rage - WWE style! Wrestling superstars don't just settle their differences in the ring anymore. In Crush Hour, they get in customized, weapon-enabled vehicles and blow each other to pieces. THQ has Jet Moto 3 developer Pacifico Coast Power & Light working on a car combat game for 2003 with over a dozen WWE Superstars. They'll shoot, they'll scoot, and they'll roody-poo all over 12 huge arenas. Good of JR will even call the action. Think we're foolin'? Oh no, it's true. It's damn true.

GAMECUBE

WARIO WORLD



For all of you Wario aficionados out there, your beloved character is about to get a major upgrade. Unlike his Game Boy adventures, Wario is stepping into the third dimension in his quest to find out why the basement of his castle is filling up with monsters, and where all of his treasure has gone. To fill his ever-increasing need for wealth, Wario will platform his way through a number of worlds in much the same vein Mario did back in his 64-bit days. Get ready to hop on the War-wagon on November 11!

PLAYSTATION 2

THE SIMS



In this, the first console version of the popular Sims franchise, things will be a lot different from the PC version. With features like two-player split-screen action, brand new Sims, a re-vamped graphical engine, and the ability to play in a familiar open-ended environment or in a mission mode complete with an ending, this is a game that has some serious teeth. EA plans to put this one on the shelves by fall.

PHOTOPHILE

XBOX

WORLD WRESTLING RAW 2



It's redemption time for THQ and World Wrestling on the Xbox. Much like aniling Steve Austin "The Ringmaster" at the start of his WWE career, we will forgive Raw for being terrible under one condition: the sequel kicks butt. Again developed by Anchor and scheduled for 2003, this new Raw will have TLC matches, backstage areas, a multiplayer career mode, and the ability to use the Xbox's hard drive to customize your wrestler's entrance music. From the sounds of it, a new Raw's not a bad thing; it's a good thing.

PLAYSTATION 2

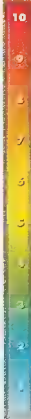
ZONE OF THE ENDERS: THE 2ND RUNNER



Slated to debut in early 2003, Zone of the Enders: The 2nd Runner (or ZOE2, as it's being called) will feature the same mech combat and frenzied fighting we were delighted to witness in the game's first offering; and it will also showcase an in-depth plot, as well as sweeping visuals. Konami is confident it will be able to repeat the success it enjoyed with ZOE by implementing more sub-weapons, new maneuvers, and a host of updated visual effects.

REVIEWS

Our crack (or crackhead) review team never decide which review team rates games in a number of categories to help you sort out the great from the stuff you hate. Each game is reviewed by at least two staff members, and you will find both their opinions on each review. To make things a little easier we have put together some definitions of what the numbers mean, what the reviewers are like (so you can find the reviewer most like yourself), what we look for in a game, and also a cheat sheet so the newbies can understand our advanced video game jargon. Read on and soon you will be talking FPS and FMV with the best of them.



THE SCORING SYSTEM

- Game Informer's rating system** ranges from 0 to 10, and is similar to school grading. 7 is average, 9 and above is exemplary work, 5 and below is a failure. Aside from concept, entertainment, graphics, playability, sound, and replay value (all explained to the right), other factors that influence a game's final score are how much game you get for your money and how all the game's elements come together.
- 10** – Perfection. One of the best games of all time, if not THE best game of all time. This game has no flaws, and thus this rating is rarely given out.
 - 9** – Worth owning. Fans of the genre should definitely enjoy this game, but even those who don't normally like this type of game may find themselves getting hooked.
 - 8** – Worth playing. Still a great game, but arguably so. It may not be the best ever, but there's enough to keep your fingers wrapped around the controller for some time.
 - 7** – Worth renting. Unless you're a fledgling gamer, you've probably seen everything this game has to offer before. Still, just checking it out won't ruin your weekend.
 - 6** – Limited appeal. There are always a few people who will fall in love with a game of this caliber, but for the most part, those playing it will be yearning for something more.
 - 5 & BELOW** – Garbage. From this point down, it's just a matter of how much of a failure the game is. The lower the score, the more you're hating life for playing it.

CONCEPT

What new ideas the game brings to the table and how well old ideas are presented.

GRAPHICS

How good a game looks, taking into account any flaws such as bad collision or pop-up.

SOUND

Does the game's music and sound effects get you involved or do they make you resolve to always play with the volume down?

PLAYABILITY

Basically, the controller to human interface. The less you think about the hunk of plastic in your hands, the better the playability.

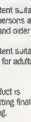
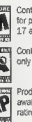
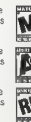
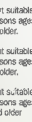
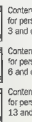
ENTERTAINMENT

Flat out, just how fun the game is to play. The most important factor in rating a game.

REPLAY VALUE

The longevity of the title.

- **High** – You'll still be popping this game in five years from now.
- **Moderately High** – Good for a long while, out the thrills won't last forever.
- **Moderate** – Good for a few months or a few times through.
- **Moderately Low** – After finishing it, there's not much reason to give it a second go.
- **Low** – You'll quit playing before you complete the game.



ANDY

Handle: The Game Hombre **Expertise:** RPGs, Action/Platform, Driving, First-Person Shooters **Interests:** Spongebob Squarepants, The Doom III Demo, E3 Parties Featuring Jane's Addiction & OutKast **Dislikes:** E3 Desclines, Disconnected Cell Phone Conversations, Ja Rule **Current Favorite Games:** Stuntman Steel Battalion, Metrod Fusion, The Pinball Of The Dead, Shinobi

When Andy's not yelling at a game for "rippin' him off," he plays drums in Minneapolis indie rock band, Unbelievable Jolly Machine. A longtime fan of Metrod, Andy has been reviewing video games professionally since the days of the 8-bit NES. While a big sports fan in real life, Andy isn't the first to line up for sports titles, but is always willing to put in the extra hours to play a good RPG or strategy game.



REINER

Handle: The Raging Gamer **Expertise:** RPGs, Fighting, Action/Platform, Strategy, Sports **Interests:** Humiliating Celebrities, Accidentally (Yet Repeatedly) Kicking Justin in The Family Jewels **Dislikes:** The Morality That Justin Makes When He's Accidentally (Yet Repeatedly) Kicked In The Beantags, Obnoxious Bob Bates (I Know I'm Hot, But Get Off) **Current Favorite Games:** Metrod Fusion, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4

Reiner considers himself the biggest Star Wars fan in the world. Along with his impressive collection of Star Wars action figures, he has seen the trilogy 576 times. A fan of all game types, role-playing games are his strong suit. In his six years as a professional gamer, Reiner has achieved the impossible. Penetrating the pixel boundary, he not only plays games, he's in one, and can be shot daily in the epic N64 release, Perfect Dark.



MATT

Handle: The Original Gamer **Expertise:** First-Person Shooters, Puzzle, Action/Adventure **Interests:** Tom Waits, Despacitos, John Updike, E3, Non-Work, Summer **Dislikes:** Work, Ja Rule, Not Being Cool Enough To Get Into The Hotel I'm Staying At, E3 Exhustion **Current Favorite Games:** Aggressive Inline, Shinobi, Super Monkey Ball 2, Ratchet & Clank, The Getaway

While record collecting, watching reality television, and playing video games might sound like a state of retarded adolescence, Matt manages to scrap together an almost meaningful existence out of these activities. His encyclopedic knowledge of pop culture is either amazing or annoying, depending on how close your desk is to his. Less esoteric than his colleagues, Matt prefers traditional action and platform games.



KRISTIAN

Handle: The Game Dawg **Expertise:** RPGs, Strategy, Sports **Interests:** Jane's Addiction, Wallpaper In My Bathroom, Star Wars Episode II, The Discovery Channel **Dislikes:** Commercials, When The Dog Bites, When The Bee Stings, Throbbing Feet **Current Favorite Games:** Madden NFL 2002 (Xbox), Age Of Mythology, PlanetSide, Highland Warriors

Kristian enjoys opening a can of whoop-ass on his buddies at the ping pong table, then running off to the driving range for a lesson in humility and anger management. The original text-driven Zork started Kristian on the gaming road; Ultima 6, NES Baseball, and Zelda made sure he stayed. Still an avid RPG fan, he can always find time to pound out a good sports game.



JUSTIN

Handle: The Digital Deviant **Expertise:** Action/Platform, Fighting, RPGs **Interests:** Being Devil's Advocate, Treadmills, Murray's Butterknife Steak, Downtown LA Standard Hotel, Static-X **Dislikes:** Owning A Cell Phone, Alcohol, Drugs, Cigarettes, Soda, Coffee, Sour Cream, Mayo, People Who Try Sending Me Viruses, Ja Rule **Current Favorite Games:** Aggressive Inline, Hot Shots Golf 3, Deus Ex: The Conspiracy

Unlike most gaming jargonists, Justin knows there's life outside video degradation. He's a former GWA slave and moonlights as wrestler Justie Lee in the Minnesota independent scene, where he moonlights bonds with other sweaty males – a practice that just gets blank stares when attempted on other GI reviewers. Justin's gaming tastes are highly old-school, and he plays 16-bit classics as often as he plugs into the latest titles.



KATO

Handle: The Game Katana **Expertise:** Sports, Action/Adventure, Racing, Action/Platform **Interests:** Heaten Chemistry, Star Wars Episode II, Yoda, The Mod Standard **Dislikes:** Bono And Anyone Else With A Stupid Made-Up Name, Cris Carter **Current Favorite Games:** Contra, NASCAR Heat 2003, NFL 2K3, War Of The Monsters

When not buying copious amounts of records, Kato can be found exercising good taste, feeding the goats, and trying in vain to update his wardrobe into the 21st century. Like other young men of his generation, he quickly found out that the one true real world application of good grades was the free arcade tokens that were given out at as reward. With allegiance to none, he takes on every game with an equal eye.



CHET

Handle: The Chronic Gamer **Expertise:** Fighting, Action, RPG, FPS, Shooter, Platform, Adventure **Interests:** Castlevania Webpages, Vancouver, NATO, Classic Gaming, Zombies **Dislikes:** Flying, Hotels, Tobey Maguire, Video Game Posers, Animal Flesh, Drinking Too Much **Current Favorite Games:** UT 2003, Street Fighter Alpha 3, Guru: Mark Of The Wolves, Lost Kingdoms, Castlevania: Harmony Of Dissonance

Chet considers gaming to be a lifestyle, meaning that he spends a ridiculous amount of time with his games. When he's not in an intense session with his UT clan, or relaxing with a console, he's hopelessly seeking out arcades where fighting games still rule. Although he places all other activities at a distant second, he realizes the importance of society. Unfortunately, mimicking the motions for Dragon Punches and Fireballs only scares most people.



LISA

Handle: La Game Nikita **Expertise:** Puzzle, RPGs, Action/Platform **Interests:** Sleep, Bistler Remedies, Nudity In Video Games, Summer Weather, Star Wars Episode II **Dislikes:** Overabundance Of Sequels, Convention Center Food, Anything That Is So "La", Old Toothbrushes **Current Favorite Games:** Malice, Zelda: A Link To The Past, Resident Evil 0, Tetris (GB)

Barring a brief and ill advised "I want to be popular, so I'll stop playing games" phase in late junior high, Lisa has been subverting her tendency to draw out boss battles since she was 8. She has been known to wail philosophically about why *Jiggly Puff* is desperately under-appreciated and wish that some "big" games were more fun, even if that means less pretty.

NEWBIE CHEAT SHEET

For our newer readers, here is a glossary of terms and acronyms that commonly appear in *Game Informer*. These aren't the crowds you are looking for.

action - A term we use for games like *Zone of the Enders* and *Gauntlet*.

adventure - A term we use for games like *Myst* and *Escape From Monkey Island*.

AI - Artificial Intelligence. Usually used to refer to how well the computer reacts to a human opponent.

board - A term we use for games like *Archie* and *Miner Party*.

bump-mapping - A technique where varying light effects simulate depth on textures.

CG - Computer-Generated graphics.

E3 - Electronic Entertainment Expo. The world's largest convention for video games.

fighting - A term we use for games like *Street Fighter* and *Dead or Alive*.

FMV - Full Motion Video. Usually refers to an animated CG outscene.

FPS - Frames Per Second. How many animation frames happen in one second. Also used to denote First-Person Shooters like *Doom*, *GoldenEye*, & *Unreal Tournament*.

framerate - The frames of animation used to create the illusion of movement.

frontend - A game's menus and options.

GBA - Game Boy Advance.

GBC - Game Boy Color.

GC - GameCube.

isometric - Three-quarters top down view, like *StarCraft* or *Red Alert 2*.

ISP - Internet Service Provider. The company that provides you with access to the Internet.

jaggies - Graphical lines that are jagged when they should be straight.

LAN - Local Area Network. Connecting computers or consoles together within a small space to allow communication between them. Provides fast, simultaneous game-play.

minigame - A small, simple game within a larger one.

motion-capture - Using human models and infrared cameras to record movement for game animation. Also mocap.

motion blur - Phantom frames follow an object to give the impression of realistic speed.

N64 - Nintendo 64.

NES - Nintendo Entertainment System.

NPC - Non-Player Character. Those people and creatures you see wandering around in games that are not being controlled by actual humans.

optofusion - The nerve running from the brain to the fingers, then BOOM. Into the isometric perspective of your monitor.

platform - A term we use for games like *Super Mario* and *Crash Bandicoot*.

pop-up - When onscreen objects, usually distant, suddenly appear.

PS2 - Sony PlayStation 2.

PS-X - Sony PlayStation.

particle effects - Things like smoke or sparks created in real-time.

raiding - A term we use for games like *Warhammer* and *Chu Chu Rumble*.

real-time - A term we use for games like *Crash*, *Unreal*, and *Mario Kart*.

RPG - Role-Playing Game. A game that involves a player's involvement in a story and spending points. A term we use for games like *Final Fantasy* and *Dragon Warrior*.

shooter - A term we use for games like *Mars*, *Naim*, and *Gradius*.

SNES - Super Nintendo Entertainment System.

sports - A term we use for games like *Madden NFL*.

strategy - A term we use for games like *Command & Conquer* and *Fallout Tactics*.

third-party - Something made for a console by a company other than the console manufacturer.

REVIEWS



GAME OF THE MONTH STUNTMAN

It's a rare treat indeed to find a game that both explores new territory in its genre and delivers a compelling experience right out of the gate. *Stuntman* is just such a game. Playing the role of the ultimate stuntman, your job is to follow the director's driving instructions as you complete over-the-top scenes from five riotous movies. This may sound easy, but nothing could have prepared you for this. Find out why *Stuntman* is *Game Informer's* pick for Game of the Month on page 78.

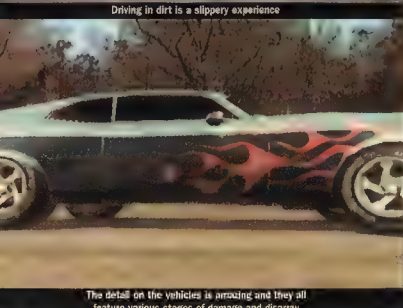




Icons show you where you need to be in each section



Driving in dirt is a slippery experience



The detail on the vehicles is amazing and they all feature various stages of damage and disarray

PLAYSTATION 2

STUNTMAN

IT TAKES A STEADY HAND

In anticipation for this review, I stopped by my local DVD retailer and picked up a copy of the Burt Reynolds' classic, *Hooper*. For those of you unfamiliar with the movie, it follows the hijinks of a stuntman as he deals with an annoying director and the threat of an up-and-coming rookie who really knows his stuff. I know — the plot sounds spectacular and you must be wondering how many awards it won, but for how amazingly bad some sections of this movie can be, none of it matters once you see some of the stunts. The most famous and final scene in the movie is a five-minute stunt de-force featuring some seriously death-defying action (including the falling smokestacks found in this game). Recreating those unbelievable sequences is what *Stuntman* is all about.

Your path to greatness, much like *Hooper's*, will be filled with difficulties to overcome and an annoying director to put up with throughout each movie set. The layout of the game is simple: you must follow the pre-setup stunts that are laid out on each of the title's six movie sets. Deviate from the path, and the snotty director will let you know. Can't stay close enough to the lead car in a chase scene? You guessed it — the director will yell "cut" on you in an instant.

Not only do you have to keep up with each scene's direction, but you will also have to pull off various maneuvers with the vehicle. From 180-degree handbrake turns, to busting through boxes and barriers, to taking jumps over and through trains, the challenges that lie before you are great. Many of these stunts require perfect timing and near-flawless driving, which will be very frustrating for some gamers. However, once you learn the route and get a feel for the car and how the scene unfolds, you'll find yourself addicted to pulling off the stunt perfectly (which is basically what is required).

For a gamer like myself, the near Zen-like state that is required to pull off the scenes — and the adrenaline rush that goes along with it — is what makes *Stuntman* the great game it is. For others, their 25th time through the same course will have them throwing this game out the window as they scream obscenities at their televisions.

If you have the stamina to complete the career mode, there is also a stunt construction set where you can use various toys and cars that you unlock to create any insane



stunt your demented mind can come up with. Also, there are a number of driving tests that you can play if you are really inclined.

While *Stuntman* may not be the follow-up that *Driver* fans everywhere wanted, I couldn't be more pleased. This game is innovative in so many ways, and its ability to make you feel part of a movie is a treat indeed. If you have always wanted to see if you could hang with the likes of Evel Knievel or the Duke Boys, this is your chance. — ANDY

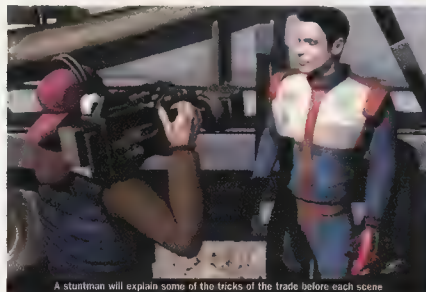


The replays give you classic movie views of your stunts

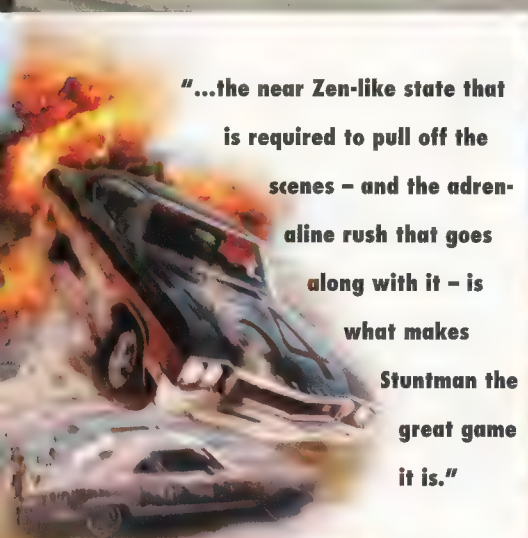
■ STYLE 1-PLAYER RACING ■ PUBLISHER ATARI / INFOGRADES ■ DEVELOPER REFLECTIONS ■ RELEASE JUNE 25



GAME OF THE MONTH STUNTMAN



A stuntman will explain some of the tricks of the trade before each scene



"...the near Zen-like state that is required to pull off the scenes - and the adrenaline rush that goes along with it - is what makes Stuntman the great game it is."



Break on through to the other side



After each movie, you head off to fire arena to complete an insane feat of stupidity - in this case, the car cannon into a wall of vehicles



After you complete all the stunts for a movie, the game gives you a trailer for the film with your feats spliced in

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN
T 9.25

- **Concept:**
Try to complete the director's pre-set stunts before time expires
- **Graphics:**
The detail and damage on the vehicles is impressive
- **Sound:**
Not the greatest voice acting, but the tunes fit the scenes perfectly
- **Playability:**
Almost every stunt requires precision, and once you get the control down, you'll begin to believe you can do anything with a car
- **Entertainment:**
The stunts can be frustrating, but there is nothing more satisfying than pulling off an amazing sequence
- **Replay Value:**
Moderate

SECOND OPINION

Racing games are a dime a dozen on the PlayStation 2, but Stuntman leaves the pack in the dust with a genuine design that alters your perception as to what a racing game could entail. Your role is to perform death-defying stunts that will be used in a motion picture. The feats that you'll be asked to complete are spectacular, and range from full-on chase sequences, to the most hair-raising and nerve-wracking of challenges. Fortunately, Stuntman doesn't survive by gimmick alone. With precise driving mechanics, massive amounts of carnage, and an adrenaline-pumping difficulty level, it has the gameplay angle completely covered as well. The level of intensity that you'll endure is unbelievable. My palms were sweating, my vision was blurring, and my mindset was a complete wreck. Stuntman is unique, powerful, and mesmerizing. We need more games like this.

REINER - 9.25



PLAYSTATION 2

TEST DRIVE

TOKYO WELCOMES CAREFUL DRIVERS!

"Test Drive is all about unlocking fast cars and then unleashing them on the streets at mach speeds."

To understand what Test Drive is all about, it helps to have some background on the developer itself—Pitbull Syndicate Limited. The company is led by a number of ex-employees from Driver creator Reflections, who headed out to make their own mark on the video game industry. While none of the members will say exactly why they left, I did manage to piece together that one of the problems revolved around conflicting ideas of what a driving game should be. After taking the newest Test Drive out for a few laps, I see exactly what they mean. Test Drive is not a driving simulation. Test Drive is all about unlocking fast cars and then unleashing them on the streets at mach speeds.

It's obvious that the developers have a love of cars and a love of games; as Test Drive keeps most things simple. The artificial intelligence in the game is set to be amazingly forgiving and yet cheat-like-all-get-out at the same time. For example, if you crash, you can expect to catch up to the rest of the pack within two turns—no matter how many seconds you waste getting back on the road. Conversely, if you are really feeling it, and are flying through traffic, the computer racers are always seconds behind. At times, this AI setup can be annoying, but if you can forget about realism, this unique architecture allows you to put the pedal to the metal and worry about the fallout later.

Ultimately, this AI was what I really loved about Test Drive. Sure, you could slow down for the turns, but it's a lot more fun to try and slide between oncoming traffic and bounce off the

wall just to see if you can do it, rather than worrying about ruining the whole race over one wreck. However, don't let the fact you can recover from a crash rather easily fool you into believing that the game doesn't offer a challenge. Pitbull did an excellent job of making sure that the game still requires you to push your skills to the limit; it just doesn't punish you for making mistakes.

The rest of Test Drive's statistics are fairly straightforward. There are 45 missions in the story mode that will take you to four different cities: San Francisco, Tokyo, London, and Monte Carlo. Most of the races are linear runs through the cities, but there are also circuits and even drag races where you can go mano-a-mano with some of the game's various characters. There is little doubt that the story mode offers a lot of gameplay, but don't expect an engrossing plot line, as it isn't terribly deep.

Like any good racing title, there is a nice selection of exotic and classic cars to choose from—23 of them in fact. From muscle cars like the Hemi Cuda to exotics like the Lotus Esprit V8, there are more than enough vehicles to appease any car fanatic.

The Test Drive franchise has proven to be a worthy addition to any library over the years, and this most recent incarnation doesn't fail to entertain. Sure, Test Drive isn't perfect, but there isn't a race fan in the world that won't find themselves addicted to its seat-of-your-pants driving. —ANDY

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** ATARI GAMES/INFOGRADES ■ **DEVELOPER** PITBULL SYNDICATE LIMITED
■ **RELEASE** MAY 14



The story unfolds between each race via Vidi Mail



Races at night on the hills of San Francisco are bound to get out of control

THE BOTTOM LINE

E

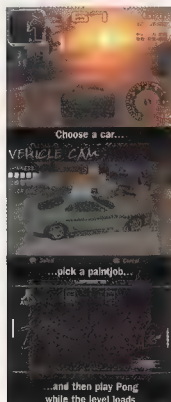
8.5

- **Concept:** Take the standard racing package and present it with a unique story mode
- **Graphics:** One of the few PlayStation 2 games that features environment mapping, but the rest of the package is par for the course
- **Sound:** Young MC > Ja Rule
- **Playability:** The steering is loose enough to be fun, and tight enough to keep it fast
- **Entertainment:** Far from realistic, yet even with all of its obvious AI tricks, Test Drive delivers an entertaining experience
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

The Test Drive series is finally switching gears. While racing is still the primary focus, players will now be treated to a Grand Theft Auto-like story mode. You won't be able to jump out of your car or freely explore a city, but the racing is now varied between numerous styles such as time attack, competitions, and drag racing. In the previous installments, the computer opponents were unmerciful. This time around, the CPU AI ties into how you race. If you mess up, the CPU will slow down and allow you to catch up. This is kind of annoying, but given how chaotic the tracks tend to be, you'll need all the help you can get. On top of this, the load time range between 30 seconds to a minute. How often will you restart a race under these conditions? Yes, it is a copout, and it does reflect bad game design, but Test Drive still manages to be a thoroughly entertaining and intense racing experience.

REINER — 8





PLAYSTATION 2

AGGRESSIVE INLINE

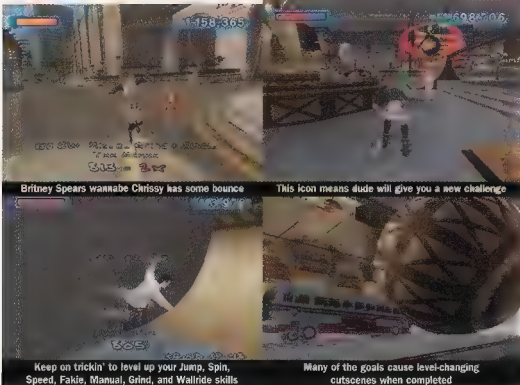
PLATFORMER & EXTREME GAME SITTING IN A TREE - R-O-C-K-I-N-G!

Inline skating will never be as cool as BMX or skateboarding. Aggressive Inline, however, is every bit as sweet as games like Dave Mirra and Tony Hawk, and goes a long way to bring the alternative sports genre to a new dimension.

This game is as much a platformer as it is an action/sports title. Each level is massive (growing more as you accumulate keys), and without a time limit. There are several goals right off the bat, and you'll pick up many more along the way. Power-ups float in the air like Tony 2's cash, giving you even more to do. Since you have all the time in the world, the hours fly by as you try to do things like handplant on a moving Ferris wheel, and grind the gears of a clock four stories up. Many of these tasks cause environment-altering cutscenes, similar to Tony 3's LA earthquake.

The circle button serves many purposes. It allows you to talk to people, switch cars, swing on poles, and even correct tricks before you bail. This means that you only have one button for vert tricks, but directional taps compensate nicely. Manuals and Revert-type moves are here, too.

I wish I had space to rave about the other great things in Aggressive Inline - the voice-overs, graphics, attribute experience system, and jiggy females all deserve praise. I can say that, if action/sports is your thing, buying this game could be the smartest move you make all year. It's that good. - **JUSTIN**



Briny Spears wannabe Chrisos has some bounce

This icon means dude will give you a new challenge

Keep on trickin' to level up your Jump, Spin, Speed, Fakie, Manual, Grind, and Wallride skills

Many of the goals cause level-changing cutscenes when completed

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM ■ **DEVELOPER** Z-AXIS ■ **RELEASE** MAY 29

THE BOTTOM LINE

T **ESRB** **9.25**

- **Concept:** An extreme sports game with more depth than we could've dreamed
- **Graphics:** Sharp models with great cloth movement. The levels are surprisingly smooth considering their size
- **Sound:** Good voiceovers and an admirable soundtrack. More songs would've been nice
- **Playability:** A tad floaty sometimes, but far superior to Z-Axis' Dave Mirra 2
- **Entertainment:** This game is a serious time-killer. You will spend countless hours, all with a smile on your face
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

Z-Axis and its Dave Mirra series have been the only credible competition for the Tony Hawk franchise, and with the release of Aggressive Inline, the So-Cal developer pulls one step closer to greatness. From stem to stern, this is an amazing action/sports title, and sets a standard that even THPS 4 will be hard-pressed to match. In a brilliant move, Z-Axis has largely done away with the stopwatch in Career mode, save for a few timed Challenges. This allows you to freely explore the franchise's massive and detailed levels to your heart's content. To put it in perspective, I'd say that the first level alone is equal to four stages in the original Tony Hawk. However, it's not all about size, as these environments are brilliantly designed, packed with events that change the landscape and hidden areas. My only criticism is that the trick system isn't quite as versatile or deep as it could be. Still, this game skates within inches of perfection.

MATT - 9.25

REVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2

WAY OF THE SAMURAI

HUH... A FIGHTER WITH A STORY?

Again, my initial impressions betrayed me this month, but in the case of Way of the Samurai, a nasty aftertaste settled upon my buds. Nevertheless, Acquire deserves credit for creating a fighting game fan's dream on the PS2.

■ **Story mode:** players undertake an RPG-like adventure as a samurai, which means exploration, sword management, an interesting non-linear story, and learning moves. Once you encounter a battle, Way of the Samurai transforms into a fighting game with a decent, open-ended combat system that resembles Kengo or Bushido Blades.

Unfortunately, a few rotten apples spoil the overall appeal. First, cheap hits from surrounding enemies will sometimes occur, even though only the targeted enemy is supposed to attack. Second, the save system is simply annoying. Not only are save points rare, but once you load a save, the game erases it. So when you die, you must start over, which would be less severe if cutscenes could be skipped. Although two memory cards and a trick (check Secret Access!) will remedy the problem, there shouldn't have been one at all. Finally, because of the non-linear progression, combat sometimes felt unbalanced.

I recommend that fans of fighters check out Way of the Samurai, but for everyone else, rent or snag it used. It must... **CHET**

THE BOTTOM LINE

M **ESRB** **7.5**

- **Concept:** Not an astounding fight game or RPG, it combines good features at a decent level.
- **Graphics:** The environments and models look good enough, but the animation is lacking in possibilities.
- **Sound:** The music is acceptable, well-done. The sound effects are convincing, too.
- **Playability:** The control scheme is good, but will take a while to get used to.
- **Entertainment:** There's some fun to be had, but the game has a few issues that probably won't bother you.
- **Replay Value:** Moderately high.

SECOND OPINION

This title has echoes of Shemue in some of its freedoms, although it never skimps on the action. Collision, loading, saving, and movement (on occasion) can cause problems, but I loved the combat system - even the way it shattered several of my swords. If you took past some of its flaws (but not the humor), you'll find more than a decent game.

KATO - 7.75

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** BAMI ■ **DEVELOPER** ACQUIRE ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 1

GAME INFORMER

REVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2

MIKE TYSON HEAVYWEIGHT BOXING

I WILL EAT YOUR CHILDREN

Nobody has had worse luck and made worse decisions than Mike Tyson. He talks a lot about his pain. While far from abysmal, after playing this game, I have a better understanding of where he's coming from.

Tyson's player creator is a beautiful thing. You can sculpt your bruiser down to the most minute of details. Building his skills, however, is quite ugly. He can't fight his way out of a paper bag, so you must collect huge sums of money to upgrade every category and punch. The fighting is unbalanced at first, resulting in baby steps until you can progress and unlock the array of real pugilists (the starting roster is paltry). I thrive on having to work for progression and it's better than nothing, but Tyson makes you suffer a little more than it should.

This is a shame, because the mechanics of Tyson are sound. I struggled with the controls at first, but quickly found that real boxing strategies applied. Keep your guard up. Stick and move. Work the combos. The charging punches come in handy, too.

You want to get to the top, kid? Mike Tyson will make you pay your dues big time. If you tough it out, there are rewards. Just be ready to bleed. **JUSTIN**

THE BOTTOM LINE
TEEN T 6.75

- Concept:** Put the most controversial boxer of all time in a mediocre fighters.
- Graphics:** Nice models, but they're shiny and expressionless like action figures. Hits connect a lot better than Knockout Kings.
- Sound:** Bobby Czyz is a great color man, but the other audio is unexciting.
- Playability:** Combos and charge attacks are creative, as are all the dodges and blocks.
- Entertainment:** While a decent bout or fistclout, Tyson makes you jump through too many hoops to get a payout.
- Replay Value:** Moderate.

SECOND OPINION

Working your way up is cool, but this game needs balance. I guess Mike figured that since he's gonna make his living losing fights from now on, so should we. The catch-up AI can be tough, and getting separation from your foe can be hard. Frustrations aside, you can't fault this game for its control and hardware approach.

KATO - 7

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** CODEMASTERS ■ **DEVELOPER** CODEMASTERS
■ **RELEASE** MAY 28



PLAYSTATION 2

FREEKSTYLE

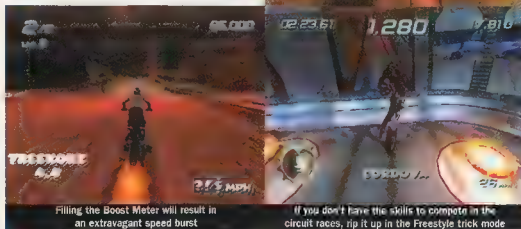
FREAKIN' IMPOSSIBLE

The Devil would blush if he heard the anger-induced profanity that rocketed out of my mouth while I played Freestyle. Despite what you may think, the unholy cursing that took place wasn't directed at Freestyle's design or gameplay, but rather, how dreadfully challenging the game manages to be.

Much like SSX and Sled Storm, Freestyle is EA Big's next supercharged racing game. The design is reminiscent of both aforementioned titles; delivering blistering speeds and parachute-worthy jumps and drops. The biggest difference between these titles and Freestyle is the competitive edge. I flew through both SSX titles, and completely obliterated the competition in Sled Storm, yet found myself on the edge of my seat through every race in Freestyle. You won't win a gold medal for lackluster racing this time around. The game pushes you to master the gameplay mechanics and study every inch of the courses for hidden shortcuts. The fact that you won't receive instant gratification will probably drive most gamers into a tirade, but once you finally do succeed, you gasp in relief and crave more.

Since the CPU AI is relentless, you'll need to bust out incredible tricks, which are executed exactly like SSX's. You'll also have the ability to link together tricks and tweak moves—all in hopes of building up the Boost Meter. Turboing is a necessity, and you'll be asked to floor it through the tightest of turns and the most clutter-filled of stretches. If you can max out the Boost Meter, you'll be rewarded with a brief "Freeout" burst of speed that sends your bike hurtling forward with fire blazing beneath its tires.

Encompassing 14 different circuit tracks, challenging races, and an entertaining (yet rewardless) freestyle trick mode, Freestyle surpasses its peers in longevity and gives the motocross genre a fresh new look. The gameplay is chaotic, but in the way you've always wanted. —REINER



Filling the Boost Meter will result in an extravagant speed burst

If you don't have the skills to compete in the circuit races, tip it up in the Freestyle trick mode

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** EA BIG ■ **DEVELOPER** EA BIG
■ **RELEASE** JUNE 18

THE BOTTOM LINE

E 8.5

- Concept:** EA Big's outrageous racing formula romances the motocross genre and pushes it to the next level.
- Graphics:** For the speeds that are delivered, the framerate is surprisingly smooth. I was also fairly impressed with the track designs and effects.
- Sound:** I could have done without the annoying announcer, but the tunes are definitely rockin'.
- Playability:** The circus-like tricks and blinding speeds are delivered in the same fashion as SSX.
- Entertainment:** The incredible difficulty level and abundance of modes and tracks will keep gamers hooked for ages.
- Replay Value:** High.

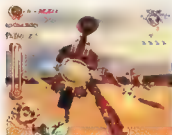
SECOND OPINION

Although you never quite share the feeling that this is just SSX with dirt bikes, Freestyle delivers a visceral punch to your consciousness. It's, as the kids say, mad hells—piling on insane fire and particle effects, stomach-churning motion blur, ear-splitting engine revving, ni-metal noise, and obnoxiously "extreme" voice-overs. Sometimes, the sensory overload is a bit much to deal with, but I can't deny that Freestyle is the real deal for extreme racing fans, and it towers over the mediocre Sled Storm sequel that EA pooped out a few months ago. It's hard, too. Mastering the stiff computer AI, serpentine tracks, and the numerous stunt maneuvers will keep you busy for awhile. The hardcore crowd will eat this up with a muddy spoon, but I suspect the entire package might be a little off-putting for more casual users.

MATT - 8

SKY GUNNER

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SHOOTER
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ATLUS
 ■ **RELEASE** JULY 1



Sky Gunner successfully captures the compelling feel and intensity of the all-but-rotting 16-bit shooter genre. With the ability to unlock hidden items and planes, Sky Gunner finally seems like a winner.

Unfortunately, this nostalgic shooter is an utter failure in some areas. Mainly, the steep learning curve and sometimes confusing objectives detract from the fun. Furthermore, horrendous slowdown often makes combat nearly unbearable. What a crying shame. — **CHET**

T 6.5

FIREBLADE

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY
 ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 11



Here's a classic case of a good game with a bad control scheme. The graphics and missions are interesting, but the controls turned me off before I was ready to quit playing. I have a sneaking suspicion that fans of the rock 'em, sock 'em, blow-stuff-up helicopter genre will be much more forgiving than most who fire this one up (no pun intended), but it's definitely going to be a thorn in their side. Proceed at flank speed. — **KRISTIAN**

T 7.5

SHIFTERS

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** JDO
 ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 17



To be diplomatic, Shifters contains both the good and the really awful. Which first? Okay, I'm a positive person...it has nice character models. The bad: camera work from the lowest pits of hell,

confounding interface, shameless use of priests from *The Mummy*, enemy AI that perpetuates the belief that monsters are horribly stupid, and yeah — it's just not that much fun. In Shifters' defense, though, those character models certainly do rock. — **LISA**

T 6.75

LETHAL SKIES

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** SAMMY ENTERTAINMENT
 ■ **RELEASE** MAY 17



How does this game handle? Well, to quote *Airplane's* Ted Striker: "Sluggish — like a wet sponge." They say that air combat can last mere seconds in real life, but Lethal Skies never captures

the sonic screams of dogfights. Being able to swivel the camera around my craft was cool, but it wasn't any use to me in trying to avoid missiles. I couldn't even control the deploying of my chaffs and flares. What remains is a by-the-numbers fier that struggles to be adequate. — **KATO**

E 6

ENDGAME

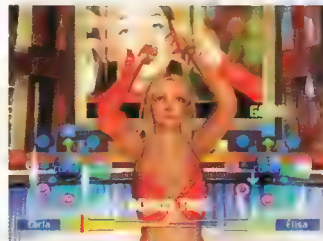
■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SHOOTER
 ■ **PUBLISHER** EMPIRE INTERACTIVE
 ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 25



These days, fans of old-school gun games are as numerous as, say, aficionados of Senegalese hip-hop, but that doesn't mean that there isn't a lot of fun to be had with a GunCon 2 and a solid

shooter. Endgame hasn't received much hype, but I found it to be on par with recent entries in the genre like *Time Crisis 2* and *Confidential Mission*. It looks sharp and provides a good degree of challenge, and even comes with a cartoonish bonus game, *Mighty Joe Jupiter*, that is a good time in its own right. Pop, pop, pop goes the nine! — **MATT**

T 8.5



BRITNEY'S DANCE BEAT

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** THQ
 ■ **RELEASE** MAY 8

Britney's hot. No, really. She's smokin'. With that said, let's get to the game. *Dance Beat* has one of the coolest interfaces of any title in the music genre, along with being one of the best synced to the game's music. Also, the multiplayer screwjoke moves are innovative, and the bonus features are great extras. You'll even have to work to beat it (the game, that is). I'm not just saying all this because, as I mentioned before, *Britney's* all it's true. Unfortunately, there are only five songs (about two versions of each). Think what you will about the seductive harlot with the raspy voice; aside from being a swell game, *Dance Beat* will bring new people to the rhythm genre, and that's a good thing. — **JUSTIN**

E 7.75

DOWNFORCE

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING
 ■ **PUBLISHER** TITUS
 ■ **RELEASE** MAY 21



I don't know why I enjoyed this game, but I did. I certainly wasn't endeared to its non-adherence to Formula One racing. No, this is arcade gameplay if I ever saw it, and as such, it won't take you too much

time to blow through. The graphics are average — although its sense of speed is good, as are the spectacular crashes. The bonus stunt mode is cool, but *Downforce* ultimately lacks depth. I guess that's what you get when the developers spend the bulk of their time making your car a screaming ball of flame. Does that sound like fun to you? — **KATO**

E 7



PLAYSTATION 2

LEGION: THE LEGEND OF EXCALIBUR

DROWNING WITH THE LADY OF THE LAKE

Fans of Arthurian lore had best keep their distance. If *Legion* were a literary composition it would be printed in the pages of *Mad Magazine*. If it were adapted into a screenplay, David Zucker would direct the picture, and Leslie Nielsen would play the role of King Arthur. To put it bluntly, the storytelling is a laughable farce.

Fortunately, however, the plot progression plays second fiddle to the action at hand. While overflowing with action/RPG overtones, the gameplay is primarily that of a brawler, drawing many comparisons to *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance*. The rules are fairly complex, allowing players to recruit allies, level up, acquire weapons, and freely switch between characters on the fly. Of much interest, players will be able to concoct their own strategies as to how to topple the opposing forces. All sounds great, but the real-time play mechanics and graphical presentation are shoddy at best. Hacking and slashing in the name of Camelot should be amusing, but in *Legion's* case, it's anything but. — **REINER**

THE BOTTOM LINE

M 5

- **Concept:** A lackluster action/RPG based on the legend of King Arthur.
- **Graphics:** Perfect for the Sega Saturn.
- **Sound:** The score is decent, but the voiceovers will make your ears bleed.
- **Playability:** Even though the controls are complex, allowing players to assemble troops and strategies, the real-time combat is nothing short of abysmal.
- **Entertainment:** I enjoyed the versatility of play, but it definitely could have benefited from another year of development.
- **Replay Value:** Low.

SECOND OPINION

I can see where *Legion* was supposed to go, and I think I would have liked it. Unfortunately, this game is too much console action and not enough PC point and click in its interaction between the troops and its interface. For ideas on how to do this right, please see *Dungeon Siege*. It's a shame, this could have been good title.

ANDY — 6

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/RPG ■ **PUBLISHER** MIDWAY
 ■ **DEVELOPER** 7 STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 17



GAMECUBE

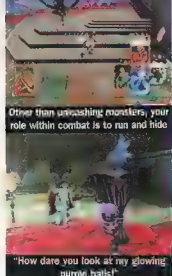
LOST KINGDOMS

RELIVING THE HORROR

"...a perfect hybrid of generalship and puppeteering. You pull the strings and your troops react."

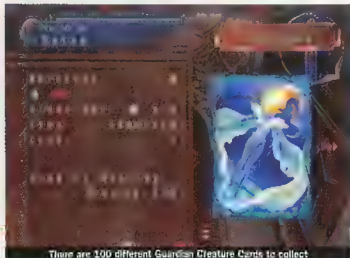


Some of the monsters grace the battlefield through flashy Final Fantasy-like entrances



Other than unwhashing monsters, your role within combat is to run and hide

"How dare you look at my glowing purple balls!"



There are 100 different Guardian Creature Cards to collect

manipulate. Because you're only able to bring 30 of them with you into a zone, you must create a deck that best fits the situation at hand. The monsters you can summon range in ability and elemental base.

Since the deck is shuffled, the order the monsters appear in is random. For specific dungeons, you may need to stack the deck in your favor by inserting duplicates. Even with limited character control, the battles are overflowing with strategies that range from defensive and offensive formations to enchantment and elemental confrontations. Toppling adversaries isn't too difficult, but ensuring that you have enough cards left in your deck for a boss encounter is where the challenge lies. Interestingly, if your monster succeeds in battle, it gains experience points. If you accumulate a specific number of points, you'll have the choice to either duplicate the card, or level up it into a more powerful beast. This is highly intriguing and ripe with advantageous tactical possibilities.

Not having the physical ability to participate in the real-time battles can be aggravating, but that's the nature of this game. It's a perfect hybrid of generalship and puppeteering. You pull the strings and your troops react. I have a feeling that hardcore role-players will completely devour and praise Lost Kingdoms for its ingenious strategies and addictive design. Different...but in a good way. —REINER



The goal of the game is to strategically build a deck around the beasts that inhabit the zones

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN
T
9-10

8

■ Concept:

A surprisingly enjoyable trading card game set within action/RPG boundaries

■ Graphics:

Appropriate for this type of game, but lacking in flashy effects and texture quality

■ Sound:

Mesmerizing melodies and malicious monster sounds

■ Playability:

Rely on creature AI to save the day. This is a shocking change for the norm, but it works!

■ Entertainment:

Overflowing with strategies, customization, and the desire to collect all 100 cards

■ Replay Value:

Moderate

SECOND OPINION

Lost Kingdoms looks generic and underwhelming. Although it doesn't revolutionize any particular game, it successfully rips all of the cool aspects from card battle games — strategy, stats, collecting, and combining — and applies them to a hell-addicting real-time RPG. The gameplay itself is unopposing and easy to understand, yet it offers enough depth to remain compelling throughout. My complaints are few and minor. The exploration feels somewhat limited. Plus the story, characters, and presentation are, as I indicated, generic. While these elements don't necessarily detract from the overall experience, they prevent players from making a personal connection (Final Fantasy does this well) that makes the adventure all the more captivating. However, a typical story complete with killer gameplay is better than a peevish and convoluted plot that hinders my fun.

CHET — 9

■ STYLE 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/RPG ■ PUBLISHER ACTIVISION ■ DEVELOPER FROM SOFTWARE ■ RELEASE APRIL 15

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MATURE
M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Blood
Violence



PlayStation 2

Acclaim
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THE BOTTOM LINE

T
7.5

XBOX

THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

A GAME TO GROW ELDERLY WITH

"You could spend years completing every task and hearing every tale."

People who are looking for a huge role-playing journey, Elder Scrolls is your prayers answered. You get huge quests, open gameplay, and one big honking world. However, there is a little bit of "be careful what you wish for" included in the package.

Last month, Kristian and Reiner heralded the PC version of Morrowind for its openness and depth. In some ways, perhaps the game should've stayed on that platform. While Xbox is essentially PC junior, the monotony of Morrowind may be a little much for console gamers to bear.

Build your character in a variety of ways, including answering some heart-wrenching multiple-choice questions like, "If your cousin started calling you an embarrassing nickname, what would you do?" As fun as this is, you may want to just outright pick your class to ensure that you're the brain-splattering warrior instead of the crafty scout. After that, what goes on is essentially up to you.

Towns are full of NPCs to interact with. This basically entails you asking a question, hoping the other character mentions something else. You then ask them about the new topic, and so on. The other big attraction is stealing stuff. There are literally hundreds of items laying around, taunting you. Many are used only for bartering with merchants. Grab them, and you'll definitely piss off some people. Guards may fine and/or arrest you, and citizens could smack you one. Deciding

whether the loot or the reputation is most important is up to you — I just can't resist freebies.

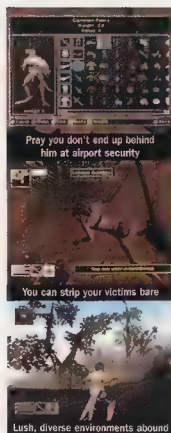
Guilds are imperative to your progress. Join one (thief, fight, mage, etc.) and you'll have a built-in group of friends, as well as the means to hone your craft of choice. They and other individuals will send you on missions, which is the meat of the Morrowind experience. It's also one of the sketchy parts of the game. First, you must listen to some complex directions to locate where you need to go. Navigation isn't that easy. Secondly, you'll need to do a lot of wandering around and leveling up in order to be tough enough to survive and report back to base.

Leveling up isn't just a matter of killing a few bad guys, though. It happens more sporadically, and I honestly don't know how you're rewarded experience. Aside from this, individual skills can go up by doing various things ranging from jumping a lot (for athleticism) to wearing your blade dull on enemy skulls. The stat-head in me digs on that.

Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind is a nice title to see brought to a console, but the audience for it is definitely a niche one. You could spend years completing every task and hearing every tale; or you could play a bunch of more satisfying games in that time. There's very little middle ground. I can't tell you which side to tread on, but I bet you already know. —JUSTIN

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** BETHESDA SOFTWARE ■ **DEVELOPER** BETHESDA SOFTWARE

■ **RELEASE** MAY 23



■ Concept:

A pseudo massively multiplayer online RPG experience for shy gamers

■ Graphics:

Sometimes it looks great. Other times, the textures and pop-up will get on your nerves

■ Sound:

Lots of ambient chatter that doesn't enhance anything. The other augo fits your quest

■ Playability:

Switching between first and third-person works well, but the combat itself is quirky

■ Entertainment:

The slow pace appeals to you, you're going to spend a big chunk of lifetime playing this game

■ Replay Value:

High

SECOND OPINION

Morrowind's ambition undeniably deserves praise. Never have I encountered an RPG granting the player so much independence. The unprecedented versatility of the character customization feature helps personalize your hero or heroine, and the simple freedom to do whatever your heart desires only acts to captivate further. Ironically, this freedom is essentially Morrowind's double-edged sword. I spent significantly more time trying to prepare my character for the unknowns of the missions rather than actually doing anything related to it — a boring and tedious approach. The choppy framerate during battles, and sloppy and imprecise combat system only made this problem more apparent. Ultimately, I have a feeling that Morrowind will be an adventure that people will either cherish or find annoying. I favor annoying.

CHET — 7.25



XBOX

OUTLAW GOLF

A LOADED SIX-STRING ON MY BACK...

Although Outlaw Golf isn't on the same level as Hot Shots 3, it's about 10 times as funny. The commentator makes this game twice as good as it would be without him. With lines like "That is a perfectly sliced ball – and by perfect I mean it sucked," I couldn't help from erupting with laughter every few minutes. The game itself is definitely solid, but it would have been awesome had Hypnotix decided to incorporate the three-tap swing. I had a hard time adjusting to the analog control, but once I did I was able to settle down and enjoy things.

That being said, I have to take issue with the small amount of courses for play. Perhaps I've been spoiled by other titles, but only having three for the entire game is a little disappointing. In any event, if you own an Xbox, and you've been pining for something similar to Sony's Hot Shots series, this is as close as you're going to get – and it ain't half bad. The characters are suitably raunchy (this game earns every inch of its T rating, believe me) and the graphics are right in line with what you'd expect from your beloved black console. The physics are a tad bouncy for my taste, but as you progress in the game they become more tolerable. A solid buy through and through. – **KRISTIAN**



■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** SIMON AND SCHUSTER
 ■ **DEVELOPER** HYPNOTIX ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 11

THE BOTTOM LINE

T 7.75

- **Concept:** It's an edgier version of Hot Shots
- **Graphics:** Great looking character models, lush environments, and decent animations
- **Sound:** The commentary in this game is second to none – I wish there was more of it
- **Playability:** No three-tap swing. A pull-push on the right analog will form your swing
- **Entertainment:** I started having fun after I adapted to the controls
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

Real golfers will scoff at Outlaw's assortment of scantily clad women and its "attitude" – but that's not all. I liked Outlaw Golf for the most part. What it gets wrong is just what you'd expect any title for this sport to get right – the golf. Somewhere along the way, the developers just missed getting the ball physics right. They bounce too much. Hell, the wind didn't even affect my shots. The best I could do was to aim way short of the pin, and then just putt to win. It's a shame, because Outlaw has some cool features, such as its minigames and being able to abuse your caddy. I also enjoyed its short game, where greens could contain a multitude of elevations and tricky spots. This title is neither realism nor fantasy, and it therefore falls short of both (and it only has three courses). Outlaw Golf is a few tweaks away from being good.

KATO – 7.5

REVIEWS



XBOX

TOTALED

GAME IDEA #54 THAT WILL NEVER REALLY WORK

Maybe the goal of Totalled was minimalism. Listening to the game, one hears very little except generic bumps and screeches. Looking at the game is even less interesting. Although cars receive impressive and fun damage (doors flop open, smoke billows from the hood, and each quarter panel crumple on its own), most of the eight play arenas are generic and lack detail.

In an attempt to make demolition derby easy to love, Rage added some extra game types that are questionable in the fun factor department. Hunter is like the childhood game tag with more damage. Stuntman lays out goals like using a ramp to jump through a goalpost. Typical games like Eliminator, Bus Jumping, and Target Jumping are also included. All of this sounds good in theory, but is

hampered by the overall lack of fun that Totalled affords its players. The cars move inconsistently. For instance, you can burn as much rubber as you want all the line before the light turns green, but as soon as it does, your high-performance hot rod saunters off with the blazing speed of a Winnebago. I really need to give Rage credit for the detail spent on the cars' models, as the mangling of body panels is pretty cool. The big problem lies in that there's nothing else Totalled offers.

LISA

THE BOTTOM LINE

E 4

- **Concept:** Hit other cars with your car. Repeat. Again and again... repeatedly.
- **Graphics:** The cars and their damage are the only point to this game. Thankfully, both look good.
- **Sound:** Nothing that shouldn't be drowned out with your own games.
- **Playability:** Although left trigger was supposed to be my brake, it was reverse – other than that, they're nice and intuitive.
- **Entertainment:** Just as much fun as crashing other peoples' cars without the satisfaction of actually doing it.
- **Replay Value:** Moderate.

SECOND OPINION

Let me put this out there: Demolition derbies don't make for exciting gameplay, since you waste most of your time balled up in a car scrum. Totalled buys into this, because it must figure that you don't need interesting levels if you're just gonna be stuck in a three-car butt bump. Yes, the cars look great, and their damage is awesome – but getting there isn't half, or any of the fun.

KATO – 4

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** MAJESCO
 ■ **DEVELOPER** RAGE SOFTWARE ■ **RELEASE** SPRING 2002

REVIEWS

XBOX LEGENDS OF WRESTLING

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER FIGHTING
■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM
■ **RELEASE** MAY 28



After jobbing out to Hawk on Xbox a few months back, I have a newfound respect for this game. The combo/reversal system is sweet, the collision is admirable, and there are several wrestling nuances—like distracting the ref—that

don't get seen enough in video games. However, the choppy animation and jerky controls, along with the small move list, keeps Legends of Wrestling from hitting the pay window.

Much respect to recently departed legends Wahoo McDaniel and Lou Teshy. —**JUSTIN**

E 7



XBOX TEST DRIVE

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING
■ **PUBLISHER** INFOGRADES
■ **RELEASE** MAY 28

It's not as drop-dead gorgeous as Gran Turismo 3 or Project Gotham, but Test Drive is a ton of fun, with a selection of cars that features a nice mixture of classic American road hogs and space-age sports cars. The Underground mode provides a nice back-story to the racing action, giving you all the more reason to try to perfect your driving skills. Also, including a fully playable Pong game during the loading screen is absolutely fabulous.

—**MATT**

E 8.5

XBOX MOTO GP

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING
■ **PUBLISHER** THQ
■ **RELEASE** MAY 15

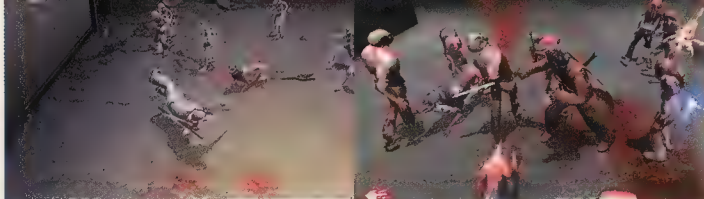


What EA and Infogrames have done for NASCAR, THQ has done for motorcycle racing. For all of you who love the low leaning, leg-flapping adventures of our two-wheeled friends, Moto GP offers a bevy of customizable options, a

good assortment of play modes, and some really sweet graphical effects. Cyclophiles are really going to get into this game, while the rest of us will nod and smile without truly ever getting it.

—**KRISTIAN**

E 8



XBOX

HUNTER: THE RECKONING

A BRAIN BUSTING SURPRISE

Zombies have held a sadistic interest for me ever since I saw *Night of the Living Dead*. I still hope that someone will build enjoyable mechanics around Romero zombie rules, like targeting brains. Although Hunter abandons any rules in favor of a typical button-mashing formula, it successfully captures that intense addictive quality found in Gauntlet style games.

Most of the combat consists of shooting, slashing, and exploding zombies, but it's accompanied by a few exciting techniques—magic and dodging. Hunter really begins to shine as players progress. You'll learn new techniques, build stats, and access new weapons. Plus, enemies become smarter, and attack in large numbers—which actually forces you to develop battle strategies. Five hours into it, and you'll find yourself dodging all over while dispatching surrounding hordes of zombies.

My complaints are few, but significant. First, the static camera can prevent an optimal perspective. Second, I found a few of the objectives tedious. Finally, the long throw of the L and R buttons made combos a bit tough.

Although Hunter isn't a deep game, it's a fun action/brawler with a decent four-player mode, and only a few flaws. —**CHET**

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** INTERPLAY ■ **DEVELOPER** DIGITAL MAYHEM
■ **RELEASE** MAY 21



XBOX

WORLD SERIES BASEBALL

THE XBOX EXPANSION TEAM

The World Series franchise has been terribly inconsistent, but with this year's release, developers Visual Concepts and Blue Shift have finally created a formula that works. Out of all of the baseball games released this year, World Series soars above the competition in graphical realism. The authenticity of the stadiums and complexity of the player models truly are second to none. I never thought I'd say this, but the shadow casting is incredible as well.

As mind-blowing as the visual presentation may be, the gameplay is somewhat disappointing, and the fantasy options don't come close to offering as much as All-Star Baseball 2003 (most notably Create-a-Team). The sensation of contact is poorly expressed within the batting/pitching interface. The ball floats to the plate like a balloon and you never really see the batter make contact. It doesn't have a good feel to it. On the other hand, the fielding is very fluid and easy to manage. World Series is a success, and it is worth looking into, but it still has a long way to go to topple All-Star. —**REINER**

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA SPORTS ■ **DEVELOPER** BLUE SHIFT/VISUAL CONCEPTS ■ **RELEASE** MAY 21

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE
ESRB

8

■ Concept:

Slash and shoot hordes of zombies in an enjoyable Gauntlet-like experience

■ Graphics:

There's no slowdown, and things look sharp, but the lack of detail is noticeable

■ Sound:

Lots of nasty sound effects set to appropriate music

■ Playability:

Fairly good. But executing combos is sometimes a pain

■ Entertainment:

It takes a little to get into, but offing hordes of zombies in single or four-player mode can get addicting!

■ Replay Value:

Moderately High

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE
ESRB

8

■ Concept:

Completely rebuilt and better, but lacks the depth of All-Star Baseball 2003

■ Graphics:

The character models look fantastic, but they don't always move fluidly

■ Sound:

The announcers are constantly babbling and are rarely repetitive

■ Playability:

The batting interface comes up short, but the fielding is ultra-smooth

■ Entertainment:

No matter how you cut it, World Series comes in a distant second

■ Replay Value:

High



PLAYSTATION

DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION KONAMIX

DANCE LIKE NO ONE'S WATCHING

There are three types of people: those who have never played Dance Dance Revolution; those who have passable DDR skills; and those who memorize every song's steps, then hang out at the arcade hoping to impress people with their moves. Fortunately, this third US DDR release caters to all of the above.

For the uninitiated, the goal is to step on the dance mat's directions in time with the music (lazy gamers can use a controller). Arrows will scroll up the screen. Once they reach the top, you must match their direction. A comprehensive tutorial will get you started in about 30 minutes. The song list is absolutely huge—over 50 tracks. Each one has three levels of difficulty. The deck is stacked for seasoned dancers, however, as it's hard to find beginner-level songs.

If I were stranded on a deserted island, DDR Konamix would be the game I would want with me. There's just that much stuff to do, see, and hear. With editing, calorie counting, and difficulty-increasing modes, it's the definitive release for the originator of the rhythm genre. Just don't be that guy lurking at the arcade. He's a dork. —**JUSTIN**

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI ■ **DEVELOPER** KONAMI
■ **RELEASE** MAY 4



PLAYSTATION

C-12: FINAL RESISTANCE

INTO THE SUNSET

Well, here they are. Some of the final crop of PS-X games that will ever be produced. Of those, C-12 is likely the last that is aching to be more than something it is. Following the journeys of a souped-up futuristic soldier, you'll use the cybernetic implants to thwart evil and restore goodness. So it doesn't have the greatest of stories, but it is an ambitious release for an all-but-dead system. If you're playing C-12 and are expecting something that will rival the experience of some of the next-gen titles out there, you will be greatly disappointed. If you're playing knowing full-well that this is a PS-X release, you'll probably be less inclined to get wound-up about the gameplay hiccups that will inevitably speckle your experience.

What this game offers is a cheap and easy way to blow stuff up without feeling guilty about turning it off after an hour of play. Plus, if you're not able to get your hands on a next-gen system, C-12 is probably the best thing to satiate your PlayStation desires. True, the controls are lacking and the graphics are decidedly dated, but there's definitely some fun to be had here in the play category. —**KRISTIAN**

■ **STYLE** 1 PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA
■ **DEVELOPER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT STUDIOS CAMBRIDGE ■ **RELEASE** JULY 23

SECOND OPINION

I've had a life-altering revelation—I will never be a dancer. Despite that, I am suggesting that everyone liberate themselves by getting down with Dance Dance Revolution Konamix.

LISA — 8.5

THE BOTTOM LINE

E **8.75**

- **Concept:** Blow up the DDR phenomenon to its highest level, hoping to get wallflowers on the floor
- **Graphics:** While simple PS-X models, DDR does what it should for a game in this genre: bright colors and flashy lights
- **Sound:** Not every song is a winner, but with 50 pieces encompassing various styles, you have a good chance of getting your ears rocked off
- **Playability:** While there are modes trying to expand the DDR formula, the old standby (four arrows) works best
- **Entertainment:** Konami went all-out with this release, and rhythm game fans everywhere should snatch it up
- **Replay Value:** High

THE BOTTOM LINE

T **7**

- **Concept:** Blow stuff up and solve puzzles while you battle the camera
- **Graphics:** Nice looking fare for the PS-X, but very dated by today's standards
- **Sound:** A surprisingly good effects structure and decent voice work
- **Playability:** The camera is bad, and the targeting is suspect at times, but it's fairly straight forward otherwise
- **Entertainment:** If you can stomach playing a PS-X title, you'll probably enjoy this
- **Replay Value:** Low

REVIEWS



BKO 6

PLAYSTATION

THE ITALIAN JOB

WE ARE THE MODS, WE ARE THE MODS

Finally, us Mod gamers: something to sink our teeth into—and I'm not talking about those PC punces who "moddy." I mean the Mods who would rather tweak up their Lamborghini scooters

three-button mohair suit, listening to 60s soul music instead of sitting in front of their PCs. In other words, if your first words out of jail are likely to be "take me to my tailor" (or if you've enjoyed Driver), you'll dig this mix of driving challenges based on the cult sixties film starring Michael Caine.

Nobody will be blown away by the standard objectives before you. Escapes, chases, errands, and good old ramming missions are driving staples that this title applies. Also, depth is added through the Destructor, Checkpoint, and Party Play modes. Gameplay-wise, maps were of a good size and didn't contain too much pop-up. The cars, on the other hand, were sluggish and didn't differentiate themselves enough. Also, the shocks bounced more than an overworked bed in a Hammersmith flat. This means you'll spend needless time bouncing into/off of things. But it's made up for some by the fact that the title has employed a hilarious Michael Caine impersonator.

All the words "noondav underground" mean anything to you, or you don't know who Tanner is, then The Italian Job is definitely just for you. For everyone else, it's still an enjoyable title at a nice price. —**KATO**

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 2-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** ROCKSTAR GAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** SCI ■ **RELEASE** MAY 6

THE BOTTOM LINE

E **7.5**

- **Concept:** The best video game to play on a Michael Caine film never. At least until Alito comes out.
- **Graphics:** It looks like ass compared to now, but beats out Driver 2's pop-up.
- **Sound:** Here's an example: "Na—although I know mah way around a motah, and the curved bits of a bird, traffic computers aren't mah thing."
- **Playability:** Feels a little sluggish at times, and the cars could use some new shocks.
- **Entertainment:** Should be fun for those who either still play their PS-X, or anyone looking for a budget thrill (under \$15).
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

The Italian Job isn't that impressive technology-wise, but with good games few and far between on PS-X, its gameplay really shines. It's got attitude, some funny missions, and more modes that you would expect out of a title that costs 10 bucks. I'd pay at least 25 greenbacks for this one and still feel like I took Rockstar to the cleaners.

ANDY — 8



"The first 15 to 20 minutes were a lot of fun. Then the rest of the game set in."



PLAYSTATION 2

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE II: DOUBLE HELIX

GOOD THEN BAD

I was going into this game with a lot of expectations. I mean, let's face it: This has been a banner year for my beloved first-person shooter genre. You've got the heavyweight champion, *Allied Assault*; you've got some great tactical games like *Ghost Recon*; you've got awesome multiplayer games like *Tribes 2*; and you've got sentimental favorites like *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*. So I'll admit it: I needed to see something bigger and better than any of those before I was going to be really satisfied. I was a bit surprised when I did see something better – but not everything. The gore in *Soldier of Fortune II* is nothing short of gruesomely magnificent. Shooting a guy in the throat will illicit a sequence where the gentleman will grab his neck and blood will start pouring over his hands, down his clothes, and onto the ground below him as he crumples into a lifeless heap. So, the first 15 to 20 minutes were a lot of fun. Then the rest of the game set in.

First of all, I must voice my extreme disappointment with the save system. You're only allowed a certain number of saves for every level – which is okay in theory, but the

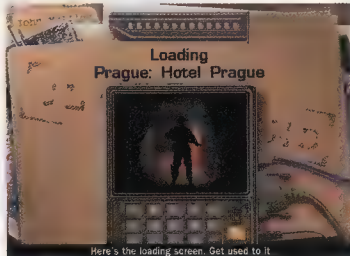


loading times are so long that you're left watching a loading screen as much as you are playing the game on some of the tougher levels.

So, obnoxious saving parameters and irritating cutscenes will bug, but what about the gameplay? Is it fun? The answer is yes – until you start getting into. On several occasions I needed to kill guards quietly so an alarm wouldn't be triggered. That means no firearms (unless you have a silencer, which you won't), and you're going to need to be quick. Your trusty old knife will do the trick, right? Sometimes. You can walk right up behind some guy and start hacking away at the back of his neck, which may or may not bring him down. If he doesn't fall, he'll more than likely run away and pull some alarm, which leaves you staring at that bleeding loading screen all over again. You'd think a professionally trained operative would be able to find some wire somewhere and do a choke maneuver, but no.

I know fans of this series are going to eat *SoF II* up with a spoon, but nice gore and a few good levels just doesn't cut it for me. Plus the graphics are – shall we say – something that I was very disappointed in. See? I didn't even swear. Do yourself a favor and stick to the tried-and-true titles out there – this one isn't worth sinking your money into. – KRISTIAN

■ STYLE 1 TO 32-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER ACTIVISION ■ DEVELOPER RAVEN SOFTWARE ■ RELEASE MAY 21



THE BOTTOM LINE



7

- **Concept:**
A first-person shooter featuring a lot of gore, and a lot of frustration
- **Graphics:**
Best when viewed at a distance. Things get really blocky when you close in
- **Sound:**
Decent effects, but nothing that hasn't been done better elsewhere
- **Playability:**
For an FPS, this game really makes you work for your kills. The controls need a lot of flipping around, and they're not very intuitive
- **Entertainment:**
There is fun to be had here, but you'll be hard pressed to enjoy it all the way through
- **Replay Value:**
High

SECOND OPINION

I had high hopes when I popped in *Soldier of Fortune II*. Hopes that the ingenious developer Raven Software used in pushing *Jedi Outcast* to be one of the best Star Wars titles of all time would do the same for this series. Sadly, *Soldier of Fortune* wasn't as...um...fortunate. The one-player missions start off with a whirlwind of gameplay that quickly got me hooked, but as the game progressed, its lack of originality and innovation really started to wear on me. For example, the stealth portions of the game totally lacked vision. The player is basically required to walk into a soldier's peripheral vision to execute a one-hit stealth kill, which goes against all the rules and standards set by *Duke* or *Metal Gear Solid*. Where are the cool new moves or the ability to move bodies? Where is some AI that makes sense? As it stands, *SoF II* is really no different than any other first-person shooter on the market. Multiplayer is fun, but that's not enough to set it apart.

ANDY – 7



PC

TACTICAL OPS: ASSAULT ON TERROR

RED-HEADED AND LOATHING IT

Unfortunately for the legions of UT fans out there, Tactical Operations is ultimately a lesson on how not to put together a multi-player FPS title. Sure it looks good – so does a '76 Jaguar – but looks can be deceiving. The Jag will begin having problems the second you drive it off the lot; similarly, Tac Ops' fun will fizzle within an hour of play.

I guess this begs the question: What makes this type of game fun? The tactical strategizing of a Return to Castle Wolfenstein – that's one thing. The advanced ballistics modeling of a Global Ops – that's two. The vehicles of Tribes 2 – that's three. The strategic and highly-balanced play of Counter-Strike – that's four...yet Tactical Ops rarely comes close to sniffing the hairy crack of any of the aforementioned titles during gameplay. Instead, what we're given are maps clogged with choke-points, and weapons that spit out ammunition so fast the average gamer is dead within mere seconds of spawning.

All of this creates an environment that fosters blind encounters where players are desperately flailing away at their mouse pads as they squeeze off a clip in less than a second. There's very little strategy involved in accomplishing the map objectives – things players all but ignore anyway. – KRISTIAN



■ **STYLE** 1 TO 32-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** INFOGRAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** KAMEHAN STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE** APRIL 23

THE BOTTOM LINE



5

■ **Concept:**
An online FPS that tries hard to measure up to the big boys, but ultimately fails.

■ **Graphics:**
Tight-as-a-drum environments lend that "being there" feeling to the affair

■ **Sound:**
These effects sound like they were fished off of a 99¢ sampler CD you'd buy at Wal-Mart

■ **Playability:**
Easy to pick up, but some of the menus are clunky and cumbersome

■ **Entertainment:**
If you love four seconds worth of gameplay before you die, saddle up

■ **Replay Value:**
High

SECOND OPINION

One of the more interesting Unreal Tournament Mods, Tactical Ops clearly tries to imitate Half-Life's Counter-Strike, but comes up short. First, the maps, while decent, don't always offer a fair chance to each role. This problem seems related to my second gripe. The run-and-gun nature of the UT engine doesn't feel suited to TO's gameplay. If you're a UT fan who's grown tired of that classic FPS, and want to try something different, TO's similarities in feel and presentation will make it easier for you to get accustomed to this type of game. However, if you're still into UT, you'll certainly miss some features that differentiate UT from the rest. Mainly, Microprose removed the alternate fire button, and eliminated the ability to perform dodges and flips. Unless you're a UT player looking for something somewhat familiar, yet different, I suggest you get Counter-Strike.

CHET – 7

REVIEWS



PC

THE SUM OF ALL FEARS

MR. CLARK, MEET MR. GATES

The Sum of All Fears is yet another ribbon in the ever-growing salad bar (those awards on the left side of military uniforms) that Ubi Soft is accumulating with the help of Tom Clancy's Red Storm company. Here we have a tactical shooter that has all of the thrills in all of the right places. Of course, it has little to nothing to do with the book after which it is named, but who's keeping track?

It's nice that the title is a solid effort in a popular genre, but to and behold there are some glaring problems that keep it from being truly exceptional. The first and most concerning issue is the abysmal AI of any and all NPCs. Case in point: I order one of my squad mates to flashbang a doorway because I know there are enemies on the other side. So he opens the door, stands directly in the middle of the opening, and lazily takes what I assume is a flashbang out all the while getting shot to death by the people standing not 10 feet away from him. Sigh. The rest of the game is peppered with AI deficiencies like this, but when you look beyond that, you've got a solid FPS with the attention to detail only a Clancy game can

@we – KRISTIAN

THE BOTTOM LINE



7.5

■ **Concept:**
A tactical shooter that feels a lot like the others Red Storm has released

■ **Graphics:**
Good enough, but things are a little blockier than previously expected

■ **Sound:**
Attention to detail in this department makes the game much more intense

■ **Playability:**
It's an FPS with a few more commands thrown in, you shouldn't have any problems

■ **Entertainment:**
Fans of this genre have reason to rejoice yet again

■ **Replay Value:**
High

SECOND OPINION

The single-player game is short and fairly monotonous. Furthermore, I found the enemy AI to be inconsistent, and cheap in some cases. However, fans will certainly appreciate the slightly expanded squad command system. Although the online component doesn't differ greatly from its predecessors, it certainly has a few new additions to keep the following asped.

CHET – 6.75

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 36-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** RED STORM ENTERTAINMENT ■ **RELEASE** MAY 28



GAME BOY ADVANCE

STAR WARS: EPISODE II ATTACK OF THE CLONES

THE DARK SIDE OF HANDHELD
GAMING

This game should come packaged with a blow-up doll of George

Lucas. Certainly, this is an obscure idea, but it would allow all of the people who make the mistake of purchasing this game to exact revenge on the plaid-wearing oaf for being so careless with the Star Wars license. I'd beat the thing silly for Jar Jar Binks alone. Of course, I'm sure the fanboys out there would find other uses for it as well.

In my opinion, *Attack of the Clones* is the best Star Wars movie since *The Empire Strikes Back*, but at the same time, it's also the worst Star Wars game to date. The graphics have a certain flair to them, the likes of which you'd see oozing out of a defective bar toilet. If the visual material doesn't make your stomach churn, then perhaps the sordid combat, annoying platforming challenges, and unmanageable controls will. To make matters worse, the characters hobble around the screen like action figures with rusty joints. They look like Bob

Hope...20 years from now, no matter how you cut it, *Attack of the Clones* is a Death Star-sized disaster.

— REINER

THE BOTTOM LINE



Concept:

An inquisitive action game that plays like a Tiger LOD handheld.

Graphics:

The characters look great until they move. The animation is stiff, unrealistic, and laughable.

Sound:

The music is the only redeeming quality in this game. Perfect for blind people!

Playability:

Well, you can move your character...not very well, in my mind, but it is possible to get from point A to point B.

Entertainment:

The only joy that can come from this game is if you spontaneously combust while playing it.

Replay Value:

Low.

SECOND OPINION

It's really hard to review this game without using obscene language, but here goes. I didn't expect much from a Star Wars OBA game, but *Attack of the Clones* has literally THE worst control scheme I've ever seen in my life. On top of that, it's incredibly unimaginative and boring. Call this the most worthless thing associated with George Lucas since Jar Jar Binks.

MATT — 1



GAME BOY ADVANCE

THE PINBALL OF THE DEAD

ALIEN CRUSH FANS REJOICE!!!

I'm sure I wasn't the only gamer that danced with glee when THQ and Sega announced that Game Boy Advance would be the lucky recipient of *The Pinball of the Dead* — a silver ball edition of the arcade hit *The House of the Dead*. It's just too perfect of a match, and I'm happy to report that the game is just as good in execution as it is in concept.

Featuring three boards that can be taken on singularly in Normal mode or sequentially in the difficult Challenge mode, *The Pinball of the Dead* delivers flipper fun that rivals many of the classics like *Alien Crush* or *Kirby's Pinball* on Game Boy. Each board features some unique twists and a chance to take on all of the bosses from the arcade in various bonus areas.

It may not be the deepest game or the best video pinball title of all time, but it is a fantastic cart, and one that you will come back to again and again for as long as you own your Game Boy Advance. — ANDY

THE BOTTOM LINE



Concept:

If you can't figure this out from the title, you have bigger problems — like those voices in your head.

Graphics:

There are enough bells, whistles, lights, and creepy crawler creatures to make it work.

Sound:

A pocket-sized version of the arcade soundtrack.

Playability:

If you are old enough to remember what a real pinball machine is, you won't be disappointed.

Entertainment:

What can be more entertaining than three pinball games involving zombies?

Replay Value:

Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

Although *Pinball of the Dead* doesn't introduce anything terribly new for the genre, it's still an enjoyable pinball title; almost as fun as *Devil's Crush* for the TurboGrafx, but not quite. The ball physics are accurate, the boss encounters offer a decent challenge, and the extras are adequate enough. Plus, the theme — shooting shiny balls through zombie heads — appeals to me quite a bit. However, there's one glaring drawback that diminishes *Dead*'s overall enjoyability: board variety. Not only are players limited to only three boards, but all of them bear too much resemblance to one another. Mainly, the design layout of each stage appears nearly identical. Still, since *Dead* is easy to get into and enjoy for a short while, you will find that it is a perfect game to pop in while stuck in an airport, or something.

CHET — 7.75



■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER THQ ■ DEVELOPER SEGA/WOW
ENTERTAINMENT ■ RELEASE JUNE 18

BRITNEY'S DANCE BEAT

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
■ **PUBLISHER** THQ
■ **RELEASE** MARCH 2



Fighting my kneejerk reaction to shun anything "Britney," I must admit that Britney's Dance Beat is a fun game. While it is alarming how well her music

translates to MIDI, the GBA handles her classics with amazing grace—even the gyrations that have scared mothers across America are captured in fluid detail. Britney a go-go only falters due to lack of space, offering a measly five songs and two arenas to play in. —LISA

E 8

WOLFENSTEIN 3D

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER SHOOTER
■ **PUBLISHER** BAM ENTERTAINMENT
■ **RELEASE** APRIL 2



There should be few questions regarding this Game Boy Advance edition of the PC classic. All the Nazi-splattering fun is there. Personally, I've

always enjoyed Wolfenstein for the screaming payoff that the shot soldiers (and their dogs) give you before they die. With no multiplayer, however, Wolfenstein doesn't seem as attractive when compared to another classic GBA rerelease—Doom. Regardless, a first-person shooter of this caliber on the GBA is hard to pass up. —KATO

M 7



NASCAR HEAT 2002

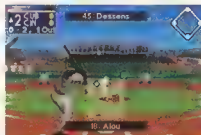
■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING
■ **PUBLISHER** INFOGRAVES
■ **RELEASE** MAY 7

It may come off as just another Micro Machines title at first, but NASCAR Heat is no little Dick (Trickle, that is). Beat the Heat is in there, as are some recognizable tracks and fairly challenging road courses—complete with left and right turns. Hell, you can even draft. However, Heat does run into a balance problem in that you don't race in a pack much, and doing so almost always causes a costly pile-up. I would've liked a track map also, but this game's got enough depth and challenge to warrant a purchase. —KATO

E 7.5

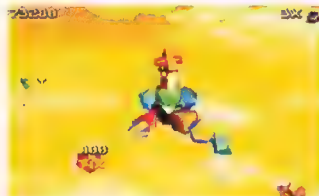
ALL-STAR BASEBALL 2003

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS
■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM
■ **RELEASE** MAY 14



This handheld version is just as intuitive and no details were spared within the visual presentation. I was also taken aback by the accurate statistical tracking and intelligence of the CPU controlled teams. Without a doubt, this is the best handheld baseball title for the GBA. It's definitely worth a look. —REINER

E 8



ZOCUBE

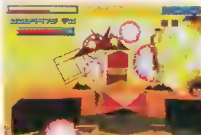
■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER PUZZLE
■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM
■ **RELEASE** MAY 30

The GBA version appears to have nothing to do with animals, but Zocube is an incredibly addictive puzzle game even in its simplicity. Basically, you need to rotate your cube to match up like shapes—that's it! The only aspects I found seriously lacking were the superficial features. Although it's a GBA game, I know the developers couldn't create slightly more interesting backgrounds, and thrown in a few more music tracks. —CHET

E 8.5

STAR X

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SHOOTER
■ **PUBLISHER** BAM ENTERTAINMENT
■ **RELEASE** APRIL 18



What this game does graphically amazes me. What it does in terms of gameplay isn't quite so spectacular. I like the free-roaming stages, but the other, more Star Fox-inspired levels quickly bored me. Targeting is a pain, and the weapons are boring. The storyline elements try to pull you into the game, but I still wasn't interested. Star X works as a quick diversion, but I had no desire to put in much time with it. The shooter genre isn't aging so well. —JUSTIN

E 6.75



GAME BOY ADVANCE

DESERT STRIKE ADVANCE

A GAME TO SINK YOUR CHOPPERS INTO

This is a difficult game figure I'd get that out of the way right off, since it's pretty much the dominating factor as to whether you'll like Desert Strike Advance or not. Do you have nerves of steel and determination for days? If so, you're a better man than I.

The Strike series is a cult classic from the 16-bit era, and this version faithfully duplicates the experience. Fly missions as a souped-up chopper in an attempt to stop a power-hungry dictator from doing the ol' Pinky and the Brain (trying to take over the world). A machine gun, several missiles, and a handful of hydra bombs serve to add dust and debris to an already desert landscape.

A one-man army has its disadvantages. Bloodthirsty enemies will hurl projectiles at you from every angle as you try to complete your tasks. When ammo and fuel supplies run low (which happens often), a mad dash for the nearest supplies ensues. At least the controls are very intuitive.

Good graphics and sweet control don't do you much good when you see the Game Over screen every five minutes. This is strictly a hardcore-exclusive title. If your gaming skills rival those of Master Yoda, then I say take Desert Strike Advance for a spin. If not, stick to Mario Kart. —JUSTIN

THE BOTTOM LINE

E 7.5

■ **Concept:** A hardcore chopper action game from a classic franchise.

■ **Graphics:** Nicely done, though on the cylinders the 16-bit console classics still.

■ **Sound:** You might as well get a friend to blast on his guitar, as the music is so good, it's hard to believe it's not.

■ **Playability:** Movement that can only be described as Resident Evil-esque, and some subtle targeting aids.

■ **Entertainment:** A nice package, but dying this often is only fun if you're a sadomasochist.

■ **Replay Value:** Moderately Low.

SECOND OPINION


I fell head over heels in love with the 16-bit Strike games, and this GBA release, which just happens to coincide with the series' 10th anniversary, is just as addictive now as it was back in the day. The sheer depth of strategy, inventive resource management, and impressive controls blend perfectly—creating a thrilling gaming experience.

REINER — 8

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS
■ **DEVELOPER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **RELEASE** MAY 7

CHARTS

In association with the NPD TRSTS Video Games Service, Charts presents an in-depth listing of the best-selling software on a month-to-month basis. Are the games you spend your hard-earned dollars on top sellers? Take a look below to find out. We've also compiled a listing of the top-selling Japanese software, and, of course, we included a Top 10 list of the games the GI staff is currently enjoying.



NPD TOP 20

Listings Based Upon NPD Data For April 2002. Based On Units Sold

RANK	L MO	GAME	SYSTEM	SCORE	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
1	N/A	Spider-Man	PS2	7.75	Apr-02	\$50
2	2	Grand Theft Auto III	PS2	9.5	Oct-01	\$50
3	N/A	Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec	PS2	9	Jul-01	\$21
4	N/A	Resident Evil	GC	9.25	Apr-02	\$49
5	N/A	Spider-Man	Xbox	8.25	Apr-02	\$50

Tobey Maguire might not always see eye to eye with Reiner – or anyone over 5'5", for that matter – but none can deny his star power, both in the Spider-Man movie and this video game adaptation. Although the PS2 version is slightly inferior to the others, the massive installed base of the console keeps this one ahead of the pack. Play it with Mary Jane.

GTA III has taken the number one or two spot every month since its release. What other game can say that? Huh? Who wants some? Virtua Fighter 4, you thought you were bad, now look at ya. Halo, you've been in the top 20's basement for months. Mario Advance 2, you ain't showing us much. Don't get too cocky. Spider-Man. Soon you too will fall.

Games like this one and Twisted Metal: Black were selling fine at regular price. Now that Sony lowered them to around \$20, though, they're right back at the top of the charts. GT3 still reigns as the most realistic, all-encompassing racing game yet, almost a year after its release. Will Dodge follow suit and slash Viper prices to Neon levels? Um, no.

So, we were walking around the park one day, and we saw this cute little puppy. His name was Rex, and...BOO!!! Did we scare you? No? Well, Mr. Teflon Undies, we bet you'll be freakin' and shriekin' when you play Capcom's next-gen update of the zombie blaster, Resident Evil. It looks, sounds, and plays better (and scarier) than ever. Tell 'em Barry sent ya.

Our Spider Sense is tingling. It's telling us that games released at the same time as the blockbuster movies they're based on equal huge sales figures. License aside, Spider-Man is a darn fine piece of gaming software anyway. Uh oh, we're getting more tingling. Oh, that's just our Spider Sense saying we need to tinkle.

RANK	L MO	GAME	SYSTEM	SCORE	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
6	1	Super Mario Advance 2	GBA	9.5	Feb-02	\$30
7	N/A	Spider-Man	GC	8	Apr-02	\$49
8	3	Virtua Fighter 4	PS2	9.75	Mar-02	\$48
9	N/A	ATV Offroad Fury	PS2	8.5	Feb-01	\$21
10	4	Sonic Advance	GBA	8.5	Feb-02	\$40
11	11	Triple Play 2002	PS2	6.75	Mar-02	\$50
12	N/A	Twisted Metal: Black	PS2	9.5	Jun-02	\$21
13	12	Max Payne	PS2	7.75	Dec-01	\$51
14	19	James Bond 007 in...Agent Under Fire	Xbox	9.25	Mar-02	\$51
15	5	Sonic Adventure 2 Battle	GC	7.5	Feb-02	\$49
16	N/A	Yu-Gi-Oh!: Forbidden Memories	PS-X	5.5	Mar-02	\$31
17	13	All-Star Baseball 2003	PS2	9	Feb-02	\$50
18	17	Super Smash Bros. Melee	GC	9.25	Dec-01	\$49
19	N/A	Spider-Man	PS-X	8.25	Aug-00	\$20
20	20	Halo	Xbox	9.5	Nov-01	\$49

Source: NPD Interactive Entertainment Service • Kristin Barnett/VanKorff (516) 625-2481

JAPAN TOP 10					Source: Game Machine Based On Monthly Units Sold
POS	L MO	GAME		SYSTEM	
1	N/A	World Soccer Winning Eleven 6		PS2	
2	N/A	Mobile Suit Gundam: Giren's Ambition		PS2	
3	2	Kingdom Hearts		PS2	
4	N/A	NetsuChu Pro Baseball 2002		PS2	
5	N/A	Rockman Zero		GBA	
6	N/A	2002 FIFA World Cup		PS2	
7	N/A	Tennis Princes Genius Boys Academy		GBA	
8	N/A	Zetsutai Zetsumai City		PS2	
9	5	One Piece Grand Battle 2		PS-X	
10	4	Fire Emblem Sword Seal		GBA	



GAME INFORMER TOP 10					The Staff's Favorite Picks
POS	L MO	GAME		SYSTEM	
1	N/A	Stuntman		PS2	
2	N/A	Aggressive Inline		PS2	
3	N/A	Hot Shots Golf 3		PS2	
4	1	Medal of Honor: Frontline		PS2	
5	2	Resident Evil		GC	
6	10	Grand Theft Auto III		PS2	
7	N/A	Test Drive		Xbox	
8	N/A	Dungeon Siege		PC	
9	4	Virtua Fighter 4		PS2	
10	6	Deus Ex: The Conspiracy		PS2	



PC TOP 10					Based On Monthly Units Sold. Source: NPD Interactive Entertainment Source: Kristin Barnett/VanKorff (516) 625-2481
POS	L MO	GAME	MONTH	PRICE	
1	1	The Sims: Vacation	Mar-02	\$29	
2	8	Dungeon Siege	Mar-02	\$42	
3	2	The Sims	Feb-00	\$42	
4	4	Star Wars: Jedi Outcast	Mar-02	\$47	
5	3	Medal of Honor: Allied Assault	Jan-02	\$45	
6	5	The Sims: Hot Date	Nov-01	\$28	
7	6	Harry Potter & The Sorcerer's Stone	Nov-01	\$28	
8	10	The Sims: Livin' Large	Sep-00	\$28	
9	N/A	Heroes of Might & Magic IV	Apr-00	\$43	
10	9	Roller Coaster Tycoon	May-99	\$21	



GAMEINFORMER

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FINAL FANTASY

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2 ■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** SQUARE SOFT ■ **REVIEWED** JAN-02



square Soft continues to improve upon perfection, not only setting a new standard for role-playing games, but video games as a whole. Final Fantasy X is a breakthrough release, a visionary tale, a masterpiece for the ages. Back to the 32-bit days with a vengeance on the side. Square of visuals, and

— REINER

PLAYSTATION 2

[illegible]

PLAYSTATION

[illegible]

GAMECUBE

19th Annual			ESPN SportsCenter	3
American Pro Truckin'	6	Apr-02	ESPN NFL Prime Time 2002	6
ATX Skateboard Series	5.75	Feb-02	ESPN NFL Games	6
Biggest Wheelie 2002	6	Apr-02	Snowboarding 2002	6.7
Batman: Vengeance	6	Feb-02	F1 2001	7.7
Blood Road: Petrol Fury	8	Apr-02	Fusion 2002	7.7
Boxing	7.75	Apr-02	Golden State	8.5
Cell Damage	5	Mar-02	Guns On Vinyl	8
Crazy Taxi	7.75	Jan-02	Halo	8
Crash Bandicoot	7.75	Jan-02	Hardcore Boot '07 In	8
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2	6.75	Feb-02	Into America Fire	8.2
Donald Duck: Get Quackers	7	Jan-02	Joe's Big Radio Fests	7
ESPN MLS Estimate 2002	7.25	Jan-02	Kidz: Kings of the Ring	8.7
ESPN Soccer 2002	7.25	Jan-02	Kidz: Kings of the Ring	8.7
FIFA Soccer 2002	8	Feb-02	Mad Dash Racing	6
Guaranteed Dam Legacy	7.25	Mar-02	Mad Dash Racing	6
Guaranteed Dam Legacy	7.25	Mar-02	Mad Payne	9
James Bond 007 ... in ...			MD2002	
John Under Fire	8.25	May-02	Realistic Rival Carmichael	7.2
Just a Minute	8	Nov-01	NASCAR Heat 2002	8.2
Madchen NFL 2002	8	Feb-02	NASCAR Thunder 2002	8
NBA 2002	9	Mar-02	NBA 2002	8.2
NBA 2002	9	Mar-02	NBA 2002	8.2
NBA 2002	9	Mar-02	NBA 2002	8.2
NBA Street	8	May-02a	NBA Inside Drive 2002	8.2
NHL Hits 2002	8	Feb-02	NBA Live 2002	8.2
NHL Hits 2002	8	Feb-02	New Line 2002	8.2
Planet of the World 2	8.25	Jan-02	NFL 2002	8.2
Planet of the World 2	8.25	Jan-02	NFL 2002	8.2
President Evil	8	Mar-02	NFL 2002	8.2
Smashin' Road Rage	7	Apr-02	NHL 2002	8.2
Smashing Drive	7	Apr-02	NHL 2002	8.2
Soccer Slam	7.75	Apr-02	NHL Hits 2002	8.2
Stone Island 2 Battle	8	Jan-02	Originals	8.2
Super Adventure	7.75	May-02	Outward: Mountain Odyssey	7
SSX Tricky	8.5	Feb-02	Project Goliath 2002	8.7
SSX Tricky	8.5	Feb-02	RealSports Challenge	8
Super Smash Bros. Melee	8.5	Nov-01	Shrek	8.2
Super Smash Bros. Melee	8.5	Nov-01	Silent Hill 2: Restless Dreams	8.2
Super Smash Bros. Melee	8.5	Nov-01	Simpsons Road Rage	8
University Studies			The Smashing Drive	
Theme Park Adventure	4	Mar-02	The Smashing Drive	
Virus 2002	8	Apr-02	Super Hero	7.7
Wave Rider: Blue Storm	8.5	Nov-01	Super Hunter	7.7

[illegible]

DREAMCAST		
Allen Front Online	8	Sep-01
Alone in the Dark		
The New Nightmare	8	Nov-01
Atari Anniversary Edition	6	Sep-01
Bombberman Online	8.5	Nov-01
Death Crimson OK	4	Dec-01
Heavy Metal: Geomatrix	3	Dec-01
Star Wars: Jedi Starfighter		
Star Wars: Obi-Wan		
Star Wars: Starfighter		
Special Edition		
Test Drive Off Road:		
Wide Open		
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2X		
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3		
Transworld Surf		

JADE COCOON 2

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2 ■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ROLE GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT ■ **REVIEWED** FEB-02

Jade Cocoon 2's gamepieces seem dumbed down at a lot of strategy comes play. The four different types are very unique, a combining them yields interesting results. Unlike

subject your creatures to battles for them to advance - just need to be in the party. The combination of mission discovering new eggs, and furthering the story keeps this game from hitting that stale spell that plagues many RPGs. - **JUSTIN**

[illegible]

Mar-02
Mar-02

Apr-02 ■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2 ■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER
Feb-02 ■ **PUBLISHER** KOEI ■ **REVIEWED** MAR-02



Jan-02
Dec-01
Dec-01
Mar-02
Jun-02
Apr-02

your guitar playing may time your picking perfectly, but if your direction is off, your playing will be inaccurate, your line will be lost. By outplaying you, you advance in levels and gain access to different songs. — **KRISTIAN**

[illegible]

GAME BOY ADVANCE

Advance Wars	9.25	Sep-01	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater
Alienators: Evoution Continues	7	Feb-02	Wario Land 4
American Bass Challenge	6	Feb-02	Wendy: Every Which Way
Arcade Advanced	7.5	Jun-02	X-Men: Reign of Apocoly
Asari Anniversary Advance	7	Jun-02	Zone of the Enders:
Battlestar Galactica	7.5	Jun-02	The Fish of Mers

Blender Brothers
Bomberman Tournament

GAME BOY COLOR	
Breath of Fire	7 Nov-01
Breath of Fire II	8 Nov-01
Breath of Fire III	8 Apr-02
Coliseum Cross	6 Dec-01
Crash Bandicoot	
The Huge Adventure	6.5 Apr-02
Crusin' Velocity	4.5 Mar-02
Dark Arks	7 Apr-02
Drive a Freestyle BMX 2	6.25 Mar-02
Dynaflop	
The Dynaflop Plates	6 Jun-02
Timeline: Monster Hunter	7 Feb-02
Doors	7 Dec-01
Dragon Ball Z	
The Legacy Of Goku	7.5 May-02
Adore of the Night	7 Nov-01
The New Nightmares	
Dragon Warrior III	
Dragon Warrior Monsters	
Dragon Warrior Monsters 2	
Mummy Legends	
The Golden Crystal	
Shantae	
Tony Racer	
Curse of the Sword	
Top Gun: Firestorm	
Wendy, Every Which Way	
WW-B-Girl	
Z-Raid: Wolverine's Rage	
Yu-Gi-Oh! Clash Duel Slot	

GAME INFORMER 97

SECRET ACCESS

PS2 PLAYSTATION 2



RedCard 2003

Debug Cheat - Head to the Profile screen and entire BIG-TANK as your name. Once entered, all of the teams, stadiums, and the Finals mode will be unlocked.

"The VidMan"
Uptown, MN

DARK CLOUD

This cheat works with the original release as well as the new Greatest Hits edition.

Demon Shaft Dungeon - Complete the game, and save your data. If you reload this file, a new location will appear on the world map. The Demon Shaft is the hardest dungeon in the game and consists of 100 floors. You'll receive the Chronicle 2 Sword upon completion.

"The GI Staff"
Minneapolis, MN



MISTER MOSQUITO

Enter both of these codes at the Character Selection screen.

Father Mosquito - Hold L2, then press Up, Right, Left, Down, ☐ (x2), R2 (x3). To activate this code, you'll first need to enable Mother Mosquito.

Mother Mosquito - Hold L1, then press Up, Right, Left, Down, ☐ (x2), R1 (x3).

Nathan Lang
Cheshire, IL

ENDGAME

To enter these codes, press Start on the Title Screen. This will bring you to the Main Menu. From here, pull the trigger the number of times required to reach the desired letter in the alphabet. After you do this, press duck to bring up the next letter. For example, if you want to enter the letter B, pull the trigger twice, then hit duck. For the letter L, pull the trigger 12 times, then hit duck. For your convenience, we've included the trigger numbers next to the codes.

All Mighty Joe Jupiter - MIGHTIER (13, 9, 7, 8, 20, 9, 5, 18)

Arcade Mode - BLAM (2, 12, 1, 13)

Country Challenges - ABROAD (1, 2, 18, 15, 1, 4)

Unlock Everything - MEBIGCHEAT (13, 5, 2, 9, 7, 3, 8, 5, 1, 20)

Carl Junior
Los Angeles, CA



STATE OF EMERGENCY

Enter all of these codes during gameplay.

AK47 - Left, Right, Down, R2,

Big Player - R1, R2, L1, L2,

Decapitations - L1, L2, R1, R2,

Flame Thrower - Left, Right, Down, R1,

Grenade - Left, Right, Down, R2,

Grenade Launcher - Left, Right, Down, R1,

Invincibility - L1, L2, R1, R2,

M16 - Left, Right, Down, R2,

Minigun - Left, Right, Down, R1,

Molotov Cocktail - Left, Right, Down, R2,

More Looting - R1, L1, R2, L2,

Pepper Spray - Left, Right, Down, L1,

Pistol - Left, Right, Down, L1,

Play as Bull - In Kaos mode, press Right (x4),

Play as Freak - In Kaos mode, press Right (x4),

Play as Spanky - In Kaos mode, press Right (x4),

Rocket Launcher - Left, Right, Down, R1,

Shotgun - Left, Right, Down, L2,

Skip Mission - Head to the Mission Giver and during the briefing, press Left (x4),

Small Player - R1, R2, L1, L2,

Tazer - Left, Right, Down, L1,

Tear Gas - Left, Right, Down, L1,

Unlimited Ammo - L1, L2, R1, R2,

Jerle Shannara
Wheeler, ND



GRAN TURISMO 3: A-SPEC

These codes and cheats will work with the original release as well as the new Greatest Hits edition.

Professional Mode - Select Arcade mode and highlight the Hard option. From here, hold L1 and R1 until Hard changes to Professional.

Multiple Bonus Cars - This trick requires that you have two PS2 Memory Cards and a ton of cash built up. Before the last race in a Championship Series, if you have at least an 11-point lead over the second place car, save your game onto Memory Card #1. Start the final race, then quit. You'll still win, since your margin was untouchable. Once you get the bonus car, save the game onto Memory Card #2. Now, load your game off of Memory Card #1. Start the final race again, and quit. Continue restarting until you get a different prize car. When this happens, head home, and go to the Trade menu. Load the garage from Memory Card #2. Purchase the first bonus car so that you have both cars in your garage. Save this data to Memory Card #2. Once again, load the data from Memory Card #1 and repeat the process until you unlock the fourth prize car. Purchase all three cars from Memory Card #2, then save the data onto your file on Memory Card #1.

Select Bonus Car - The cars that you win for a race series are not randomly chosen. When the silhouetted cards begin to appear, press when the large black circle appears under the desired car. If you miss out on the car you want, you can save prior to the last race and continually retry until you snag the ride of your dreams.

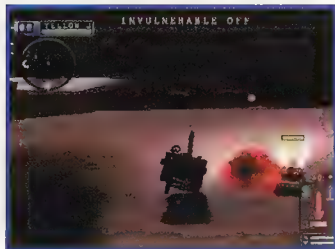
"The GI Staff"
Minneapolis, MN

PARAPPA THE RAPPER 2

Ninja Star Mode - At the Stage Select Screen, hold R1 and R2, then choose a stage. When the game begins, all of the icons will be replaced by ninja throwing stars.

Quick Skip - At the Stage Selection screen, hold L1 and L2 to make the game skip straight to the tune.

"GI Droid"
(location unknown - last seen rolling around in a vat of mayonnaise)



TWISTED METAL: BLACK

These codes work with the original release as well as the new Greatest Hits edition.

Cheats

To enter these codes, the control configuration must be set to the Classic setting.

God Mode – During gameplay, hold L1, L2, R1, R2, then quickly press Up, X, Left, O. If this code is entered correctly, God Mode On will appear at the top of the screen.

Infinite Health & Turbo – During gameplay, hold L1, L2, R1, R2, then quickly press Right, Left, Down, Up. If this code is entered correctly, Invulnerable On will appear at the top of the screen.

Invincibility – During gameplay, hold L1, L2, R1, R2, then quickly press Up, Down, Left, Right (x2), Left, Down, Up. If this code is entered correctly, Invulnerable On will appear at the top of the screen.

Mega Guns – During gameplay, hold L1, L2, R1, R2, then quickly press X (x2), Δ. If this code is entered correctly, Mega Guns On will appear at the top of the screen.

No Opponents – Select Challenge mode, then at the Opponent Selection screen press L2 + R2, L2 + R2, L2 + R2 + O.

One Hit Kills – During gameplay, hold L1, L2, R1, R2, then quickly press X (x2), Up. If this code is entered correctly, Killer Weapons On will appear at the top of the screen.

Weapon For Health – During gameplay, hold L1, L2, R1, R2, then quickly press Δ, X, □, O. If this code is entered correctly, Weapon for Health On will appear at the top of the screen.

*"The Gl Staff"
Minneapolis, MN*

WAY OF THE SAMURAI

Memory Card Trick – Once you continue from a save, the game will automatically erase your data, which means that if you die before another save point, your data is lost. So to avoid starting over, simply copy your data on to a second memory card. You can now begin your game from your last save. However, just in case you die again, remember: Before you continue off of your second save, copy your data from the second memory card back on to the first.

*"The Game Molester"
Washington, DC*

ONIMUSHA: WARLORDS

The Bishamon Ocarina & Bishamon Sword – The Bishamon Ocarina is found at the end of the Dark Realm rooms. This Ocarina will open a door in the save room prior to the last boss. Inside this door you will find the Bishamon Sword.

The Panda Suit – A hilarious new costume for Samanosuke will be selectable after the adventure is done. Use the L2 button to put on the head.



Code Boxes & Books – The work versus the reward is asked when attempting to unlock the four Code Boxes in the game. These cryptic code puzzles can be deciphered using the volumes of colored Code Books. Regrettably, these Code Boxes offer only a Magic or Power Jewel. Pay attention to the scene in the beginning where Samanosuke is given the Gauntlet for clues on the Clan of Ogres. Better yet, look at the solution to each box puzzle below.



Box #1: Clan of Ogres



Box #2: Gauntlet of Ogres



Box #3: Chasm of Dimensions



Box #4: Dragon Orb

Box #1 – The South Area Entrance
Box #2 – The Magic Mirror In The South Area Cave
Box #3 – The West Area Magic Mirror (Kaede only)
Box #4 – East Area Magic Mirror (Past The Waterfall)

ATV OFFROAD FURY

These codes work with the original release as well as the new Greatest Hits edition. Enter all of these cheats as a Pro-Career mode name.

All ATVs – CHACHING
All Tracks – WHATEXIT
Expert Mode – ALLLOUTAI
Fast Racers – ALLQUIKI
Yamaha Raptor ATV – DINOSAUR

*"The Gl Staff"
Minneapolis, MN*

WORLD OF OUTLAWS: SPRINT CARS 2002

Enter all of these codes as Career mode names.

\$5,000,000 – CHIMCHIM
All Tracks – JOEYJOEJOE
All Drivers – MITYMASTA
Best Track Configure – MEGEDERECK

*"Daddy Fat Sax"
Memphis, TN*



YU-GI-OH! FORBIDDEN MEMORIES

To enter these cheats, head to the Load Game option and select Password. The codes below will unlock the corresponding cards. Of course, you'll need a specific number of Starships to get the cards from these passwords.

Ancient Elf – 93221206
Ansatsu – 48365709
Beaver Warrior – 32452818
Blue-Eyes White Dragon – 89631139
Book of Secret Arts – 91595718
Celtic Guardian – 91152256
Curse of Dragon – 28279543
Dark Hole – 53129443
Dark Magician – 46986414
Darkworld Thorns – 43500484
Dragon Capture Jar – 50045299
Enchanting Mermaid – 75376965
Fiend Reflection #2 – 02863439
Firegrass – 53293545
Flame Ghost – 58528964
Flame Swordsman – 45231177
Gala the Pierce Knight – 06388038
Hane-Hane – 07089711
King Fog – 84686841
Mammoth Graveyard – 40374923
Monster Egg – 36121917
Mystical Sheep #2 – 83464209
Nemuriko – 90963488
Red-Eyes B. Dragon – 74677422
Red Medicine – 38199696
Reverse Trap – 77622396
Silver Fang – 90357090
Sogen – 86318356
Splice Seara – 85326399
Summoned Skull – 70781052
Sword Arm of Dragon – 13069066
Sword of Dark Destruction – 37120512
Yami – 59197169

*"Terrible Timmy"
Hinkley, MN*

ARC THE LAD

Slime Time Minigame – At the Main Menu of the Making Of disc, press O (x2), X, □ (x2), Δ, O, X, □. Start. If the code is entered correctly, a message will flash across the screen.

*Jack Sigmund
 Fargo, ND*

CODE OF THE MONTH



THE ITALIAN JOB

Enter all of these codes at the Main Menu. You'll hear a crowd cheer when a cheat is entered correctly.

Cheat Mode – Δ (x2), \circ (x2), \square (x2), \triangle (x2), \square (x2), \triangle (x2)
 All Challenges – \square (x2), \triangle (x2), \square (x2), \triangle (x2), \square (x2), \triangle (x2)
 All Destructors – Δ (x2), \square (x2), \triangle (x2), \square (x2), \triangle (x2), \square (x2)
 All Free Rides & Lamborghini Miura – \square (x2), \triangle (x2), \square (x2), \triangle (x2), \square (x2), \triangle (x2)

Jonathan McEwing
Denver, CO



GRAND THEFT AUTO 2

Enter all of these codes as player names.

\$1,000,000 – BIGSCORE
 5x Multiplier – HIGHFIVE
 All Weapons – NAVARONE
 Debug Mode – NOFRILLS
 Display Coordinates – WUGGLES
 Invincibility – LIVELONG
 Level Select – ITSALLUP
 Max Wanted Level – DESIRES
 No Police – LOSEFEEDS
 Turbo Mode – IGNITION

Owen Wilson
Green Growl, IA



RALLYSPORT CHALLENGE

Enter all of these codes as driver names.

Classic Cars – TheGoodStuff
 Downhill Tracks – Geronimo
 Endurance Races – TheLongHaul
 Expert Cars – WheelToWheel

Michael York
New York, NY

ESPN NBA 2NIGHT 2002

Enter all of these codes at the Cheat screen.

Basketball Heads – BALLHEAD
 Better Performance – ABILITYBONUS
 Better Shooting – EXCELLENT
 Big Hands – BIGHAND
 Big Heads – BIGHEAD
 Big Feet – BIGFOOT
 Easy Dunks – DUNKERS
 Flat Players – PANCAKE
 Invisible Players – INVISIBLE
 No Spectators – NOSPECTATOR
 Show Ball Trails – BEFOREIMAGE
 Small Players – MINIMINI

Leslie Smith
Boston, MA



MAX PAYNE

Cheat Menu – Begin a game, then press the Back button to bring up the Main Menu. Now, press and hold the L Button, R Button, then quickly tap White, Black (x2), White (x2), Black. If entered correctly, a cheat menu will appear with a Refill option for Ammo, Pain Killers and Bullet Time. Other cheats will be added to the menu throughout the course of the game. This code is extremely fidgety and must be nailed on the first try whenever you leave the game. Good luck!

Steven Frost
Las Vegas, NV



All-Star Baseball 2003

Cheat For Card Points – This trick is incredibly easy, but nobody ever thinks of it. If you want to unlock all of the cards in the game, but don't want to play through an entire 162 game season, follow this strategy. Begin a new game against the computer. Whenever the CPU is at bat, switch the controller setting so that you have control of the computer team. Don't swing, just strike out every time. By the end of the game, you'll have thrown 27 strikeouts which equates into a perfect game. This feat will be rewarded with 100 Card Points!

Easy Trivia Wins – To win every trivia game without racking your brain to figure out the answers, press B when a question is presented, the game will ask you to quit. Hit B again to continue the game. Now, press A to advance to the next question. Performing this action will grant you a single (or home run depending on the mode) every time. Piece of cake!

"The Rhino"
Toledo, OH

STAR WARS: ROGUE LEADER

The new codes keep coming! As always, enter all of these cheats at the Passcodes screen.

Imperial Shuttle – First input "AJHHI?JY". R2 won't beep in acceptance. From here, input "BUSTOUR". R2 will chirp, signaling correct code entry.

Revenge On Yavin Level – First input "OGGRWPDG". R2 won't beep in acceptance. From here, input "EEKEKE!". R2 will chirp, signaling correct code entry.

Kenny Baker
San Jose, CA

GAME BOY ADVANCE

WOLFENSTEIN 3D

Enter all of these codes from the in-game pause screen.

Full Ammo, Weapons, Keys & Health – Hold L and R, then press A, B (x2), A (x5).

God Mode – Hold L and R, then press A (x2), B, A (x5).

Level Skip – Hold L and R, then press A, B, A (x2), B (x3), A.

Warp to Level 9 – Hold L and R, then press A, B, A (x2), B (x2), A (x2).

James England
Honolulu, HI

GAME BOY ADVANCE

KONAMI COLLECTOR'S SERIES: ARCADE ADVANCED

Frogger Advanced – At the Frogger Title Screen, press Up (x2), Down (x2), Left, Right, Left, Right, B, A, Start.

Gyruss Advanced – At the Gyruss Title Screen, press Up (x2), Down (x2), Left, Right, Left, Right, B, A, Start.

Rush 'N Attack Extra Lives – At the Rush 'N Attack Title Screen, press Up (x2), Down (x2), Left, Right, Left, Right, B, A, Start.

Scramble Advanced – At the Scramble Title Screen, press Up (x2), Down (x2), Left, Right, Left, Right, B, A, Start.

Time Pilot Bonus Stage – At the Time Pilot Title Screen, press Up (x2), Down (x2), Left, Right, Left, Right, B, A, Start.

Yie-Ar Kung Fu Bonus Fighters – At the Yie-Ar Kung Fu Title Screen, press Up (x2), Down (x2), Left, Right, Left, Right, B, A, Start.

Tobey Maguire
Chicago, IL



ICE AGE

Enter all of these codes at the Password screen.

- Level 2 – PBBQBB
- Level 3 – QBCQBB
- Level 4 – SBFQBB
- Level 5 – DBKQBB
- Level 6 – NBTQBB
- Level 7 – PCTQBB
- Level 8 – RFTQBB
- Level 9 – CKTKQBB
- Level 10 – MTTQBB

Kenneth Louis
Cleveland, OH



BRITNEY'S DANCE BEAT

Enter this code at the Password screen.

Cheat Mode – HMNFK

Christina Aguilera
Austin, TX

PC PERSONAL COMPUTER



THE SIMS: VACATION

During gameplay, simultaneously press [Control], [Shift], and C to display the console window. Next, enter any of the codes below.

- 1,000 Simoleons** – rosebud (Press "1" to reenter this cheat as many times as needed)
- Create Character** – edit_char
- Create Moats & Streams** – water_tool
- Display Personality** – interests
- Map Editor** – map_edit on
- Move Objects** – move_objects on
- New Family History** – hist_add
- Say Plugh** – plugh
- Say Porttipsguzzardo** – porttipsguzzardo
- Say Kyzzy** – kyzzy
- Set Free Thinking Level** – autonomy [1-100]
- Set Game Speed** – sim_speed [1000-1000]
- Set Grass Change Value** – edit_grass [0-150]
- Set Grass Growth** – grow_grass [0-150]
- Set Lot Size** – lot_size [number]
- Set Time of Day** – set_hour [1-24]
- Toggle Music** – music

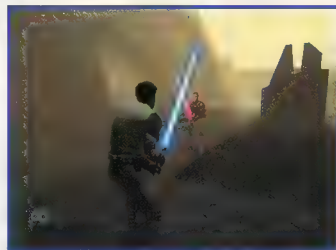
Damon Buford
Dallas, TX

THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

During gameplay, press ~ to bring up the console window. Now, type player-> followed by one of the codes listed below. For example, type player->setflying 1.

- Boost Gold** – additem gold_100 <number>
- Create Map Image File for Xbox** – createmaps <"file-name.esp">
- Flight Mode** – setflying 1
- Health** – sethealth <number>
- Infinite Air (Underwater)** – setwaterbreathing 1
- Max Fatigue Level** – setfatigue <number>
- Max Magic Level** – setmagicka <number>
- Player Level** – setlevel <number>
- Super Jumps** – setsuperjump 1
- Walk on Water** – setwaterwalking 1

"The Evil Gamer"
Salem, NJ



STAR WARS: JEDI OUTCAST

During gameplay, press and hold [Shift], then tap ~ to bring up the console window. Now, type HelpUsObi 1, then press [Enter]. At this point, you can freely input any of the cheats below.

- All Weapons** – give all
- Blind Enemies** – notarget
- Force Grip** – setForceGrip (1-3)
- Force Healing** – setForceHeal (1-3)
- Force Jump** – setForceJump (1-3)
- Force Lightning** – setForceLightning (1-3)
- Force Pull** – setForcePull (1-3)
- Force Push** – setForcePush (1-3)
- Force Speed** – setForceSpeed (1-3)
- God Mode** – god
- Jedi Mind Trick** – setMindTrick (1-3)
- Lightsaber Color** – saberColor (1-5)
- Lightsaber Defense** – setSaberDefense (1-3)
- Lightsaber Offense** – setSaberOffense (1-3)
- No Clipping** – noclip
- Saber Toss** – setSaberThrow (1-3)
- Slow Motion** – timescale .5
- Super Speed** – timescale 2

Jason Wallows

Indianapolis, IN

DUNGEON SIEGE

At any point during play, press [Enter], then type in the desired code.

- 100 Meter Bow Range** – +sniper
- 150 of Every Item** – +drdeath
- 999,999 Gold** – +checksintemhal
- Invincibility** – +zool

Mark Henderson
San Francisco, CA

ENTER TO WIN

Send in your codes and passwords, and if we choose your entry as Code of the Month you'll win a wonderful prize from the Game Informer Vault! All other entries printed within these halloved pages will receive a Secret Access t-shirt.

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Minneapolis, MN 55401
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CLASSIC GI

VIDEO GAME COLLECTING 101:

A CLASSIC GI PRIMER

As the generation reared in the late seventies and early eighties begins to look back at their childhood, video game nostalgia has begun to take root in the mainstream of American popular culture.

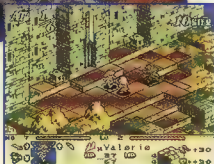
T-shirts bearing logos of Atari and other icons concerning the heyday of the arcade scene are extremely popular, and references to the classic games like Super Mario Bros. and Stargate have been seen in movies like *The Beach* and television shows like *News Radio*. As a result, many people have been shocked to discover the ancient systems and cartridges that have been gathering dust in their attics are now highly collectable. As our fathers scolded their mothers for throwing out their mint copy of X-Men #1, gamers of today might be shocked to discover that a rare copy of Panzer Dragoon Saga for the Sega Saturn has been sold for mere pennies at a neighborhood garage sale.

Sifting through the thousands of games that have been released over the last two-and-a-half decades is no easy task, and entering the world of collecting video games is often difficult for novices. To help would-be collectors along, we've put together a brief primer on video game collecting, and even sought advice from some of the top collectors in the country. If you want to start building your library, hopefully this article will point you in the right direction.

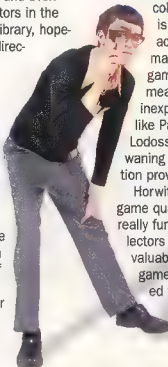
GETTING STARTED

The obvious place to start is with the collection that you probably already own. Unless you unwisely chucked all of your old systems and games, a number of you probably already possess many of the all-time greats from the Atari, NES, Genesis, and SNES eras. If you can't find them, stop by your parents' house and see if you don't have some treasures buried in a long-forgotten corner of the basement. If you don't have any interest in a bunch of outdated titles, it's important to remember that your old games might be of consider-

able value – whether to another collector or a retail chain that buys back used product.



Tactics Ogre for the PlayStation is prized by game collectors



GETTING FOCUSED

Before you begin buying every old game in sight, it's important to know what the focus of your collection is going to be. Jeremy Horwitz, the former Editor-in-Chief of Intelligent Gamer Online and an avid game collector, cautions rookies to decide on what their purpose is from the start. "For console games, my advice would be a lot different today than it was ten years ago," says Horwitz. "You should try to understand up front just why it is that you're collecting games, whether it's collecting for the sake of accumulating more and more games, or just to own all of the games you really enjoy."

QUALITY VS. RARITY

Pricing of classic video games is often determined by rarity, not quality. The good news is that, if your goal is to collect the greatest games ever released, your job is going to be much easier than if your aim is to acquire the most valuable titles on the collector's market. From Zelda to Mario to Sonic, the best games ever made were frequently strong sellers, meaning that used copies are generally plentiful and inexpensive. There are exceptions, most often games like Panzer Dragoon Saga (Sega Saturn) or Record of Lodoss War (Sega Dreamcast) that were released in the waning days of a system that was on the verge of extinction prove to be the hardest titles to find. Horwitz comments, "Initially, people often confuse game quality with price, and think that a collection full of really fun games will be worth a lot of money. Serious collectors generally come to the realization that the most valuable games are the ones that are rare – and rare games tend to be the ones that no one initially wanted to buy."



HARDWARE

Collecting software is only one facet of this fascinating hobby. The truly hardcore collectors often expand their scope to include hard-to-find home consoles (like the Vectrex, or Fairchild Channel-F) and original arcade units and circuit boards. Fortunately, most of the popular console systems from years past, like the Atari 2600, the Sega Genesis, or most of Nintendo's consoles, are fairly commonplace and can be easily and cheaply acquired.

Arcade collecting is often much more expensive, with prices for rare units often running into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Also, many vintage machines will require a good deal of restoration work, be it electronic or cosmetic. Basically, a serious arcade machine habit will require you to be a handyman of sorts, or rich enough to buy already-restored machines that are in perfect working order. Of course, there's nothing cooler to have in your party room than a classic Ms. Pac-Man machine, so all your hard work will be well worth it in the end. For more information on buying and restoring arcade units, check out this excellent site:

<http://www.matthewdesantis.com/arcades.html>. If you're looking for arcade parts to aid you in the restoration process, we found these two comprehensive retailers of all things old and plastic: www.suzo.co.uk and www.mushroom.co.uk.

WHERE TO SCORE

Now that you've got a vision for what you want your collection to become, it's time to start tracking down the objects of your desire. Where are the best places to score sweet deals on old games? Kieta Iida, a legendary collector who helped found Atari Gaming Headquarters (www.atarihq.com) and the annual Classic Gaming Expo in Las Vegas, explains your options, "Unless one has really good contacts, most collectors have one of four choices. One, the flea market/thrift store/Goodwill route; two, eBay/web retailers; three, trading; or four, used game stores. The bottom line is that it takes a lot of research, hard work and making friends to be an effective collector."

Each of these routes has its advantages and disadvantages, so let's break down both the good and the bad.

FLEA MARKETS/THRIFT

STORES/GARAGE SALES: The biggest upside to this approach is often price, as many times the people who are selling the goods are not educated on their relative worth in the market place. Also, the sheer random chance involved has a certain appeal all its own. "The thrill of the hunt is certainly an exciting aspect of collecting," injects Iida. "Finding a rare game 'in the wild' is definitely more rewarding than to simply blow \$50 on a rare game off eBay." While exciting, this unpredictability can be a drawback to this approach as well; as you can often spend hours sifting through racks of junk without finding any games at all.

EBAY: This ultra-popular online auction site has been a Mecca for collectors of all stripes, and video game fanatics are no exception. The worldwide reach of the site means that you'll have access to an unprecedented number of rare goodies, far more than you'd ever expect to find in your local area. However, our experts did have some caveats for digital bidders.

"Far too many people get themselves caught up in a bidding war which causes prices to spiral out of control," warns Iida. "The one negative about eBay is the perception among many collectors that the final selling price of a given item is necessarily its actual value, which is most often not the case. While it can serve as a general source of reference, people fail to consider that only takes two crazy bidders to drive up even the most common of items."

Horwitz also talks of possible headaches. "I have a love-hate relationship with eBay," he comments. "In my opinion, they reach a wide audience, but their customer service policies are increasingly loathsome. If you are buying or selling from a decent human being, you do well; but if you have a problem, you're screwed. Moreover, really serious game collectors can't trade truly rare stuff—even legally-acquired prototypes, for example—without running afoul of some dimwitted eBay policy. I'm increasingly looking to other auction sites, such as Yahoo and Amazon, to buy and sell games."

TRADING: The Internet is teeming with classic video game trading boards, many of which are frequented by very serious and accomplished collectors. This is a great way to make contacts with fellow enthusiasts, and can often result in deals that give both parties a cherished rarity that adds new depth to their library. However, unlike eBay, there is no customer service structure to ensure fair dealings, and novices might run the risk of being hoodwinked by a savvy veteran. In addition, the nature of trading itself means that you must give up part of your collection in order to gain something new, which might make it painful for completists.

USED RETAILERS: Used retailers are probably the easiest place for beginners to start, as they usually have many of the top titles from the past at a fair price. Generally, their stocks tend to run towards the most popular systems, especially NES, SNES, Genesis, and (now) Dreamcast. This is a great way to complete your collection of many mainstream classics without the hassles of online bidding or trading. Ultra-rare items will be few and far between, but Game Informer was once able to secure a prized copy of Panzer Dragon Saga at a chain store. Unfortunately, many times these games are sold sans box and instruction manual, which can decrease their value among collectors.

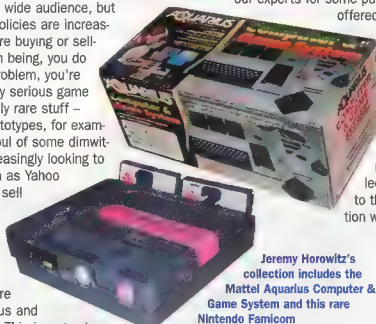
If you're looking for anything older than Nintendo Entertainment System titles, you're generally out of luck at retail, and even those stocks diminish year-by-year as more consoles join the ranks of the obsolete. Our experts were split on the merits of store shopping. Horwitz, not a proponent of store shopping, feels that chains often don't give you as much money for selling back used product as they should. Iida, who shops at chains from time to time, said that he feels that it is a good place to sell and purchase games for recently deceased systems at a reasonable price.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Hopefully, this article has given you some insight on how to begin what can be an extremely rewarding, lifelong hobby. If you love games, you'll find that owning a part of its history will be a valuable keepsake. When we asked our experts for some parting thoughts, they both offered some interesting comments.

Jeremy Horwitz urged readers to use discretion, lest their collection become too large and unwieldy: "Collections can become a huge burden if you are growing just for the sake of collecting... Many collectors reach a point at which their collections become too big. I came to this realization when my collection was consuming more than an entire room of my apartment and I was about to leave for law school in a different city. [Since then] I've pruned down my collection to a few items that are rare and unique."

Iida encourages us to remember that collecting should be about fun, not profit: "Some people get too caught up in the value of their collection. Sure, it's always nice to fantasize, but to get overly conscious of one's collection as an investment defeats the whole purpose of what makes gaming fun—playing the games. In my case, I acquired most items in my collection relatively cheaply and don't view the things I have as an 'investment,' so I have no interest in ever wanting to cash-out."



Jeremy Horwitz's collection includes the Mattel Aquarius Computer & Game System and this rare Nintendo Famicom

GREATEST GAME OF ALL TIME

By Frankie Camacho

Every month one of Game Informer's readers picks his or her personal choice for Greatest Game Of All Time.

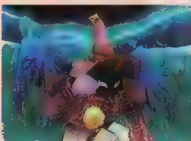


FINAL FANTASY IX

■ FORMAT PLAYSTATION
■ PUBLISHER SQUARE SOFT

Final Fantasy IX is a game that defies a rating system or a ranking. At the start, you begin as a thief on a routine mission—capturing a princess that wants to be captured. As time passes, the main character realizes that he is different, and that the way he views the nothingness of things is ironic because he comes to find that he was born of nothingness. He is a boy with a tail in a world filled with men, mages, and moogle. As you play this stellar game, the fact that there are enough minigames to make up a title of their own begins to manifest itself in your mind. Such things as hunting for buried treasure and searching for rare coffees in order to complete an action figure collection make up just a small portion of what you can expect when you play the game. A truly remarkable battle system allows you to train your characters to be merciless killers, whether it be by smashing your foes to oblivion with a meteor or pesky little ironites. Accompanying you throughout your four-disc ordeal is a storyline that is so gripping and involved, you would rather endure pulmonary edema than move your body away from the television. The unlikelyst of heroes join together to stop the forces of evil from merging their respective planets together; therefore destroying yours. There are a total of eight characters to choose from, all with different abilities and powers to utilize. Unlike the previous two Final Fantasy titles on PlayStation, there is a spot when you can take the main character out of your party. This is only possible in FFX, which adds another reason to play this game. I hope that I have convinced all

whose eyes read my words to go out and play this incredible release. If you don't have it, buy it. If you do have it, play it again and again until you hate it—if that is at all possible.



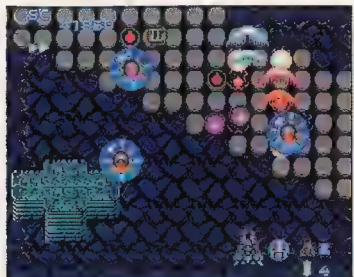
THIS MONTH IN GAMING HISTORY

Parker Brothers) the exclusive U.S. sales, marketing, and distribution rights to the Master System. The deal would prove fruitful for both parties, as Tonka's distribution muscle pushed the Master System towards sales of \$39 million in the last half of 1987, exceeding Sega's projections by more than 20 percent.

SEGA
Tonka

TURBOGRAFX 16

BLAZING LAZERS



RETRO
RATING
9.25



The shooter is a genre that was refined during the 16-bit era, where it peaked. The jump in technology meant having a lot more onscreen, with much less of the slowdown and flicker that plagued even the best NES shooters. Blazing Lazers was one of the first titles for TurboGrafx, and still stands as one of its best. The overhead perspective had endless battalions of space slime heading right for your tiny but powerful ship. Almost as prevalent as the enemies were power-ups. There were two kinds: ammunition and secondary. Each of the four weapons (laser, spread, etc.) could be upgraded several times, merely by collecting an orb with the corresponding numeral, or multiple pink ones. The same happened with secondary power-ups like shields, helper drones, and homing missiles. You could only have one of each at a time. Blazing Lazers gave that Zen feeling shooters were known for, when you feel like you're a part of the ship. Its length and challenge were just right, and it made all other shooters of the 80s look like scrap.

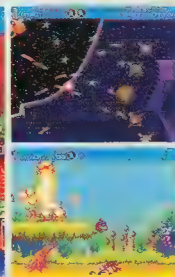
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER SHOOTER ■ **PUBLISHER** NEC ■ **DEVELOPER** HUDSON SOFT
■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1989

GENESIS

GUNSTAR HEROES



RETRO
RATING
9



Gunstar Heroes rooked back in '93, and continues to rock today. The gameplay's strict adherence to pure action undoubtedly marks its biggest achievement. From beginning to end, you'll encounter hordes of enemies bombarding the screen and a variety of opposing bosses – the running man made of balls being the most creative. Fortunately, each stage and boss fight presents something unique, which constantly requires you to consider your weapons and approach. One area places you in command of a space ship, which resembles one of many 16-bit space ship shooters, and another puts you in a board game forcing you to roll a die to determine whether you battle a boss or receive a power-up. Gunstar's only significant shortcoming is its length. Granted, you'll probably play through it two or three times, and perhaps a few more with a friend, but the game takes less than two hours to complete. If you manage to find this bad boy used, and never had the chance to play Contra's greatest competition, don't miss out.

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** TREASURE
■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1993

PLAYSTATION

DISCWORLD



RETRO
RATING
6.75

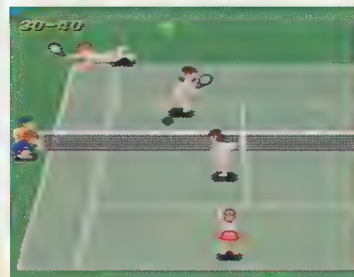


The world of Terry Pratchett's Discworld is one much like our own, except for a few distinct differences. For example, while we're on a globe, Discworld is just that – a disc. It sits on four elephants who ride atop a gigantic turtle. Magic works like Earth's religion – as a polar opposite of government; and wry British humor is the order of the day. The video game follows Rincewind, perhaps the most unlucky and talentless of Unseen University's student body, as he goes on a point-and-click adventure through Ankh-Morpork. Voiceovers abound, including Monty Python's Eric Idle as Rincewind. While it's a hilarious game, the interface and quest are extremely tedious; as is Discworld's pace. It's far too easy to get lost beyond the point of frustration. Also, loading time is a major problem. It's a blast for fans of the series (read the books!!!) and humor in general (it truly has some hilarious dialogue), but most gamers will be put to sleep by the turtle's pace.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** PSYGNOSIS ■ **DEVELOPER** PERFECT 10
■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1995

SNES

SUPER TENNIS



RETRO
RATING
7.25



Sports games, more so than most genres, don't age very well. Seemingly each year they get improved upon, and faster, better technology always dwarves previous releases; while the sport itself and its rules don't change the way fantasy-based games do. Even tennis, a sport without a real franchise until Sega's Virtua Tennis series, is not immune to this. Super Tennis, when it released on the Super Nintendo, was a killer game, blending great gameplay, sweet modes, and varied characters. Timing was essential, and you had no less than four different shot types – one for each of the SNES controller's face buttons. Now, though, it's slower and more clunky than the tennis games we're playing on Dreamcast and PlayStation 2. The cute expressions of both joy and disappointment add personality, the crowd details are crisp, and the end-game stats are still nice, but there really isn't anything that hasn't been done better now. It seems our memories of Super Tennis are a lot better than the actual game is today.

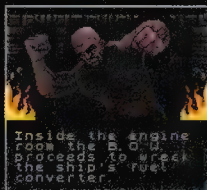
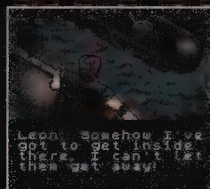
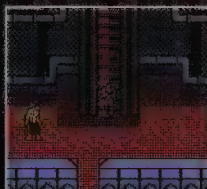
■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** TONKIN HOUSE
■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1991



RESIDENT EVIL[®]

GAIDEN

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SURVIVAL IS YOUR ONLY OPTION.



Experience the action, the intrigue and the fight of your life in this brand new chapter of Resident Evil. Hosts of deadly zombies, countless traps and lurking horrors will their discovery take you closer to the source of the Resident Evil or lessen your chances of survival?



Blood
Violence

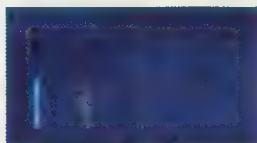
GAME BOY
COLOR



CAPCOM
capcom.com

SEGA GENESIS

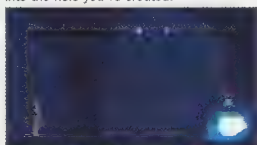
OUT OF THIS WORLD



CLIFF JUMPING

[Level Code: LBKG]

After dropping down, you'll find yourself alone in a strange room. The odd looking area to your left is a recharge unit for your gun. Recharge your gun then supershoot the doors that are standing in your way. Go two screens to the right and immediately kill the guard. Continue past his corpse and sidle up to the edge of the broken bridge. Jump off, and you'll miss the other side, but land safely on a small outcropping below. Supershoot the wall, and head into the hole you've created.



CONTROLLER-THROW LAND

[Level Code: XDDJ]

Welcome to the most demanding segment of the game thus far. Go down the pit to your right, then go down again. Once on the anvil-shaped rock, run to your right and jump past the stalagmites that at the bottom of the small ledge. Be mindful of the Strangler camped out above the bones — they're there for a reason! The next couple of rooms are filled with falling boulders.

You can get through the first room rather quickly by running through the first half, then jumping through the second, but the next room demands a bit a patience. Once you learn the rhythm of the falling boulders, you'll be able to make your way through. Continue on to your right, but be careful to avoid the Strangers on the ceilings and the Maulers on the floors. Soon you'll find yourself in a room with a slight incline holding three Strangers and Maulers. Shoot the ceiling dwellers, and carefully jump past the Maulers to get past safely. Go right until you meet a door to a huge chamber, then blast it. It'll help you out later — trust us. Now it's time to go back! Yahoo!

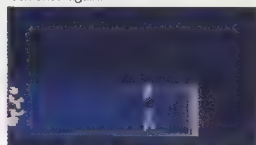


TWICE AS NICE

[Level Code: FXLC]

To get to the next section of the game, you have to go all the way back to that anvil shaped rock from the beginning. It's tough, but if you supershoot the first three

Strangers you meet, it'll make things a little easier. There's nothing you can do about the Maulers, so you'll just have to jump over them. Once you make it to the room after the second boulder room, you'll need to really get your game on. Jump over the first two Maulers, then inch your way back near the middle one — you're going to need to get a running start for this. Run towards the last Mauler and jump right before you get there. If you don't, you're Strangler food. Continue running up the slope (don't worry about the rocks) in the next room, then shoot at the cave-bird in the first boulder room. Follow it to the left, and wait on the cliff. It'll get eaten by the Strangler, which leaves you free to jump on the stalactites, and work your way to the right until you're standing on that fateful rock once again.



WATER WORKS

[Level Code: KRKF]

Fall off the left side of the rock and supershoot its base. Run up your newly-formed ramp and continue to the left. Jump over the pits until you get to the room with the water. Supershoot the small support holding the basin together, then run for your life! Jump past all of the holes and the water will lift the block you're standing on to the next level. Go up the slope to your right and blast the barrier at the top. Keep moving to your right (don't go up the stairs) and you'll see a familiar face.



THE TOUGH GET GOING

[Level Code: KLFH]

There's Mr. Fuzzy! It looks like he's stuck, though. You have to save him! Go to the right and down the stairs. Make a shield after you've taken a few steps and wait for the guard to enter the room. After he makes his shields and starts shooting at you, make another one of your own. Inch up to it, poke the point of your pistol through it and shoot back. His shield will fall before yours, but if you want a quick ending, do a supershoot followed by a regular one. This will eliminate his shield then fry him with your follow-up blast. Continue to the right, and you'll see a guard run away from you. Pursue him into the next room. Once there, make shields close enough to the doors so you can activate them without being in danger of getting shot once they open. When your shields are up, activate the doors, then quickly walk away from them again. The guard will



NEW BEGINNINGS

[Level Code: LDKD]

After the opening sequence has finished, you'll find your character (the intrepid Lester) immersed in a pool of water. Press up as soon as possible to avoid the hungry tentacles reaching up from the bottom. Once at the surface, walk to the right. You'll see a bunch of slug-looking things that will try to kill you. Dispose of them with kicks (a crouched kick will have better range), proceed to the right again, and repeat. Watch out for the critters that drop from the ceiling — they can surprise you if you're not paying attention. After dealing with the slugs, proceed to the right once more. When the beast attacks, run to the left until you see a hanging vine. Jump onto it and you'll be swung back to the previous screen. Run to the right until you're saved by some big guys with guns. Sure, they kill the beast that was chasing you, but when you try to say hello, they shoot you in the face! Real nice!



RUNNIN' AND GUNNIN'

[Level Code: HTDC]

As Lester's eyes open you'll discover you've been captured. You'll also see that the suspended cage holds another prisoner. To get out, sway the cage back and forth by pressing left and right on the d-pad. Eventually your cage will drop onto the armed guard standing below. The other prisoner, thankful for his release, will be your companion for the rest of the game. Don't let him get hurt! Upon surveying your situation, you'll find the squished guard was nice enough to drop his laser pistol. Pick it up by crouching on it, then proceed to the right. Quickly shoot the guard who's

picking on your friend (we recommend ducking while you shoot to stay out of harm's way), then go a couple more screens to the right. Once there, begin making shields by holding down and Y for a moment, then releasing it after a small sphere of energy appears at the tip of your gun. This will protect your new friend, Mr. Fuzzy (that's what we'll call him from here on out), as he works on getting the door open. Go to the right as soon as he succeeds and get on the elevator, making sure Mr. Fuzzy is with you. Go to the bottom of the shaft, then to the right. Begin shooting immediately when the next screen appears to kill the bad guy. If you haven't blasted the power conduit on the wall with your first onslaught, take care of it now. Go back to the elevator with the Fuzz-ster and go up one level. Shoot the door to the left with a supershot by holding Y until a large energy ball can be seen at the end of your gun, then releasing it. Run to the left. A teleporter in the floor will allow you to transfer between levels by pressing down when you're standing on it. Do this, and the guard will start to shoot at the doors to get at you. Luckily, you turned off the power! Run to the left and up the next teleporter. When you see the barrier, don't bother shooting it. Instead, wait for Mr. Fuzzy to open a panel in the floor for you, then crawl inside. He'll be captured, but you'll still be free to help him escape.



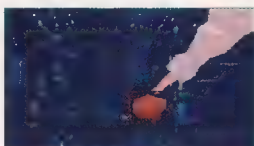
STEAMY MAZE

[Level Code: CLIZ]

This area is pretty straightforward. Roll to the left and wait for the steam jet to stop. As soon as it does, continue on and drop down to the next level. Maneuver to the right and avoid another jet. Drop down again and you'll find yourself in between two alternating jets. Go to the left, down, then right, and you've found your freedom.

lob a radiation grenade at you, but since the doors are now closed, it'll bounce off and send him to the netherworlds. Blast the door behind him, recharge your weapon in the next room, then continue to your right. You'll find three green globes suspended by chains. If you look closely you can see a guard's reflection as he walks underneath them below. Wait until he stops in the middle, then crouch down and shoot the chain. If you've done it right you'll hear the gurgling of the dying badie, and you're now free to go down those stairs you passed up three screens ago.

As you get to the first landing, shoot. This will alert a guard who was lurking off to the left. Go down the teleporter and run to the right. You'll get punched in the face by yet another guard, which will send your gun sliding across the floor. After he picks you up, hit the Y button and kick him right in the nuts! How do you like that, ballsy? In the ensuing chaos, run to your gun, pick it up and shoot your enemies. Exciting, huh? Proceed to the left for a couple of screens until you see three chandeliers. Go up the stairs, turn around and shoot one of them. This will free Mr. Fuzzy from his obstacle! Go back to the right until you get to an eerie room with three arches. When you reach the first arch, make three or four shields, walk through them, then make three or four more. You've probably noticed that two guards have jumped you. Use the supershot/regular shot combo you used earlier to get rid of them quickly, then continue to your right. Whew!



FIRE FOR EFFECT

[Level Code: BRTD]

As soon as you hit the ground, do a supershot to your right. Run through the opening quickly! They're after you! Continue running through the doors – don't stop – if you do, you'll be fried immediately. Once you hit the dead end, make a number of shields so you can stand under the hole that's on the right side of the ceiling without being shot. During your pursuit you should have seen Mr. Fuzzy crawling along the access hatch above you. It's a good thing you got him out of his jam earlier! As the guards come into the room, they'll be firing at you – just keep shooting back and making more shields. Eventually your furry savior will pop in from the ceiling hole and lift you to safety.



A LEAP OF FAITH

[Level Code: TFBH]

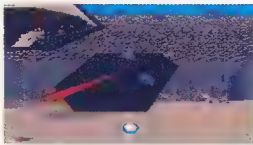
You're safe now, but not for long. Don't follow your friend as he runs blindly into the guardhouse to the right. Instead, go behind the rock to the left, then up the slight incline you thought was just art in the background. This will allow you to go behind the guardhouse and flank Mr. Fuzzy's attackers. Enter the back door, make a shield, and let 'er rip. As you can see, your friend isn't one to pass up an opportunity to administer a beat-down. After you've fried your guard, Mr. Fuzzy will quit pummeling his. You're now free to continue on to the right. When you see the big hole with the awning on the other side, stop. You can't make this jump on your own. Instead, wait on the edge of your building, and Mr. Fuzzy will throw you to safety. When he tries the jump, the slim support falls under his weight, and he's left hanging by the material. You have to save him! Stand near the edge of the building and jump off. As you fall to the next screen, you'll see another awning. You'll grab this automatically, and swing to safety. Quickly take a step or two to your right, then turn around and make a couple of shields. The guards will be on you before you know it. This has to be done very fast, or you'll get blasted. After you've taken care of those hosers, proceed to the left and into a strange new area.



OUT OF THE FRYING PAN...

[Level Code: TXHF]

What's with the stained glass in this place? It's not a church, that's for sure. Don't go up the stairs quite yet. Run to the left, and chase a bunch of your foes out of the room. One won't make it, though. Walk up to the door that closed behind him until it opens. When it does, draw your pistol, but don't shoot him (tap Y). He'll activate a security device that you need for the guard you can see above you. Head back to the stairs, then jump to the platform you see to your right when you reach the top. Make a couple of shields, then supershoot the door protecting the guard. After he has rolled four or five grenades down the stairs, finish him off and go to the left. Go down the teleporter, and begin to make a supershot as soon as you hit the ground. When the guard blows the door away, kill his shield with your shot, then burn him with a quick regular blast. Go down the teleporter, shoot the electricity out, then go back up and make your way back down the staircase. Drop through the hole those grenades made, and start running to the right. You find yourself in a dark room – just keep running to the right – those laser blasts will nip at your heels, but you should be safe. Stop at the edge of the screen and walk into the next room. Jump over the hole and pull the lever. Suddenly you can hear chaos emanating from below. Throw yourself down the hole and book it to the right! It's craziness down here! Run as fast as you can, and go up the teleporter as soon as you reach it. Walk to the left, and you'll find your buddy still clinging to the canopy above you. Move to the edge of the building, and a bridge will be activated. Mr. Fuzzy will land next to you and head to the right – follow him and go up the teleporter after he does. He will then lead you down a flight of stairs and into a vehicle of some sort...it's time for some payback!



LAND INTO THE FIRE!

[Level Code: CKUJ]

So here you are in this awesome tank, but you have no idea how to use it. Kind of like you and a toothbrush in real-life, no? Start by pressing the bottom button on the control display, then push the button it – lights up in the lower left. Six buttons will

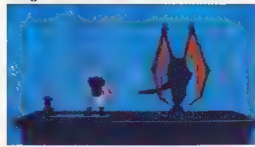
be activated on the left. Push the top four, and a flashing white button will appear. Hit it, and you'll be ejected out of this crazy arena. You can fool around with the other buttons – they'll make different things shoot from the tank which is pretty cool, but that little white friend is the only way you're getting out of here alive.



NAKED ALIEN CHICKS

[Level Code: LFCK]

This swimming hole is about to get a rude awakening – your escape pod comes crashing through the roof, and before you know it everyone is shooting at you (as usual). Run to the right and make a couple of shields when you get to the next room. The laser fire coming from behind you won't hurt you. Use the supershot/regular shot combo to get rid of the four guards coming from the right, then book it to the next room. Mr. Fuzzy will burst through the glass and lead you to the right. As you follow him, the ground will be shot out from under you. You will begin to fall, but an enemy will pluck you out of the air and slam you against a wall. Adding insult to injury, he'll kick you right in the face. Jeez! What's wrong with these guys? As he's coming towards you to finish you off, Mr. Fuzzy will drop down behind him. Yay! In the next room, the guard and your friend will begin to fight. Take this opportunity to drag yourself over to the levers on the right side of the room. When the guard pushes Mr. Fuzzy off of him, he'll start towards you. As he reaches the middle of the room, pull one of the levers. He'll get completely fried. Quickly pull another one and move towards the middle of the room. If you're fast enough, you be teleported to the roof, and Mr. Fuzzy will save you sorry butt for the last time as he picks you up, and you both ride into the sunset on the back of some weird bird-like creature. Congratulations!



WARCRAFT III ACTION FIGURES

Manufacturer: Blizzard Entertainment

Website: www.blizzard.com • List Price: \$9.99

WarCraft III: Reign of Chaos is finally upon us! In celebration of this often-delayed event, Blizzard Entertainment has sculpted a series of 6" figures after a handful of WarCraft III's more charismatic warriors. Three of the figures in this wave will release on the same day as the game. Along with the dwarven mountain king, Muradin Bronzebeard, you'll be able to line your shelves with the orish war chief Thrall, and the arch-druid night elf Furion Stormrage. Additional figures will appear periodically throughout the year.



WAVE BIRD CONTROLLER

Manufacturer: Nintendo

Website: www.nintendo.com

List Price: \$24.95

Would you believe us if we told you that the Wave Bird Controller works perfectly from 20-feet away? What if we said that it was pointed in the opposite direction of the GameCube? How about if it was in a different room altogether? Most wireless controllers are far from practical, but thanks to Nintendo's revolutionary RF technology, the Wave Bird performs just like a standard GameCube controller. Thankfully, you won't be required to point the controller directly at the receiver. Furthermore, distance isn't an issue. The only drawback to this amazing device is that the controller runs on batteries. At some point, you're going to run out of juice. To ensure that the battery life is significant, Nintendo removed the rumble feature from it. If you tire of yarn ball-like cable knots, or find yourself leaning forward wishing the controller would reach a few feet further, the Wave Bird is the solution you've been waiting for. We're still baffled as to how this invention works. Martian technology, perhaps.



FREE ODB SHIRT

Manufacturer: Café Press

Website: www.cafepress.com/cp/store/store.aspx?storeid=free_odb

List Price: \$15.00

Over the years, the Wu-Tang known as ODB has given us so many memories, whether it be lines like "I come old like to fungus mold," "I got the Asiatic flow mixed with disco/Roll up on the scene like the Count of Monte Cristo" and "It ain't lambskin/You can't use the word 'Napkin'"; bum-rushing the Grammy Awards yelling, "Wu-Tang is for the children!"; or taking former MTV News host Tabitha Soren in a limousine to go pick up his welfare check. Unfortunately, our hero has had frequent run-ins with the law, and is now serving time in upstate New York for wearing body armor while on parole (Who hasn't done that?). Word has it that ODB is not faring well in jail, but now you can help raise his spirits by wearing these stylish Free ODB long-sleeve t-shirts. With "Free ODB" emblazoned on the front, and a thoughtful quote ("I'm gonna be free like a bird, and eat birdseed...or whatever, you'll see.") from the man himself on the back, this is the shirt to rock for the double-o-two. Fight the power!



THE SUPER MARIO BROS. SUPER SHOW: MARIO'S GREATEST MOMENTS

Manufacturer: Trimark • Website: www.trimarkpictures.com

List Price: \$14.95

This exciting DVD release boasts eight different episodes from the ancient, but never-forgotten Super Mario Bros. Super Show. Along with six different Mario Bros. episodes, you'll also be treated to two bonus Zelda shows. An additional Mario cartoon and a Zelda trailer are hidden on the disc as well. The Mario episodes are "Kount Koopula," "Koopenstein," "Toad," "Warrior," "Raiders of the Lost Mushroom," "Koopzilla," and "Robo-Koopa." Zelda consists of "Kiss and Tell," and "The Missing Link." For those of you who remember the show well, we regret to inform you that all of the live action comedy bits have been removed. That's right, ex-wrestler Captain Lou Albano is nowhere to be seen (except briefly during the credits). Still, for under \$15 you really can't go wrong with this collection. We'd love to see another collection, but we'd much rather see a DVD set of Captain N!



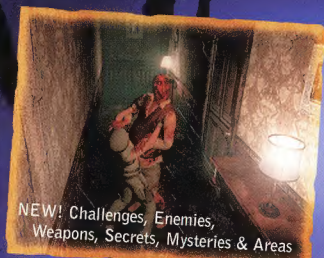


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